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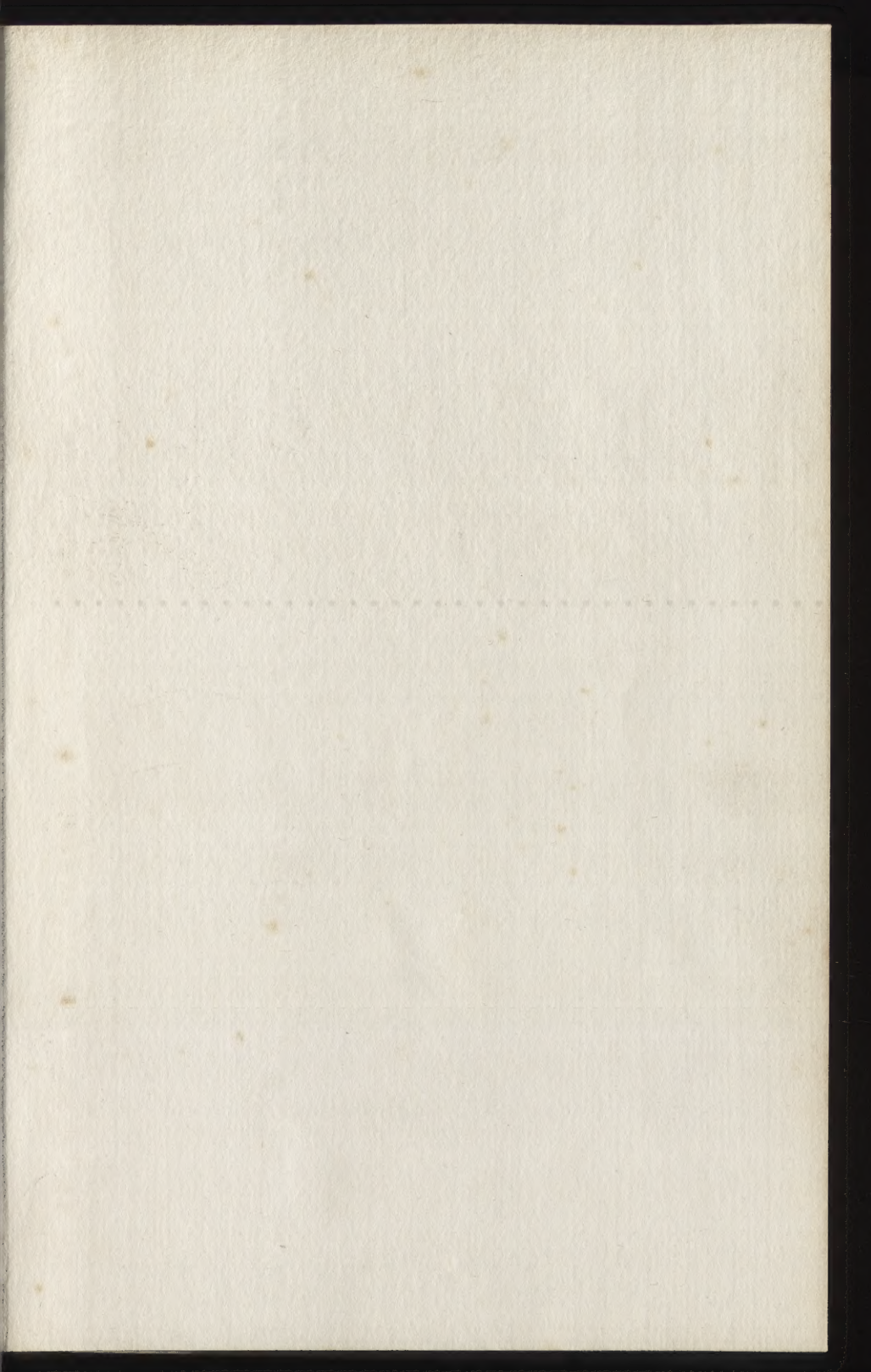
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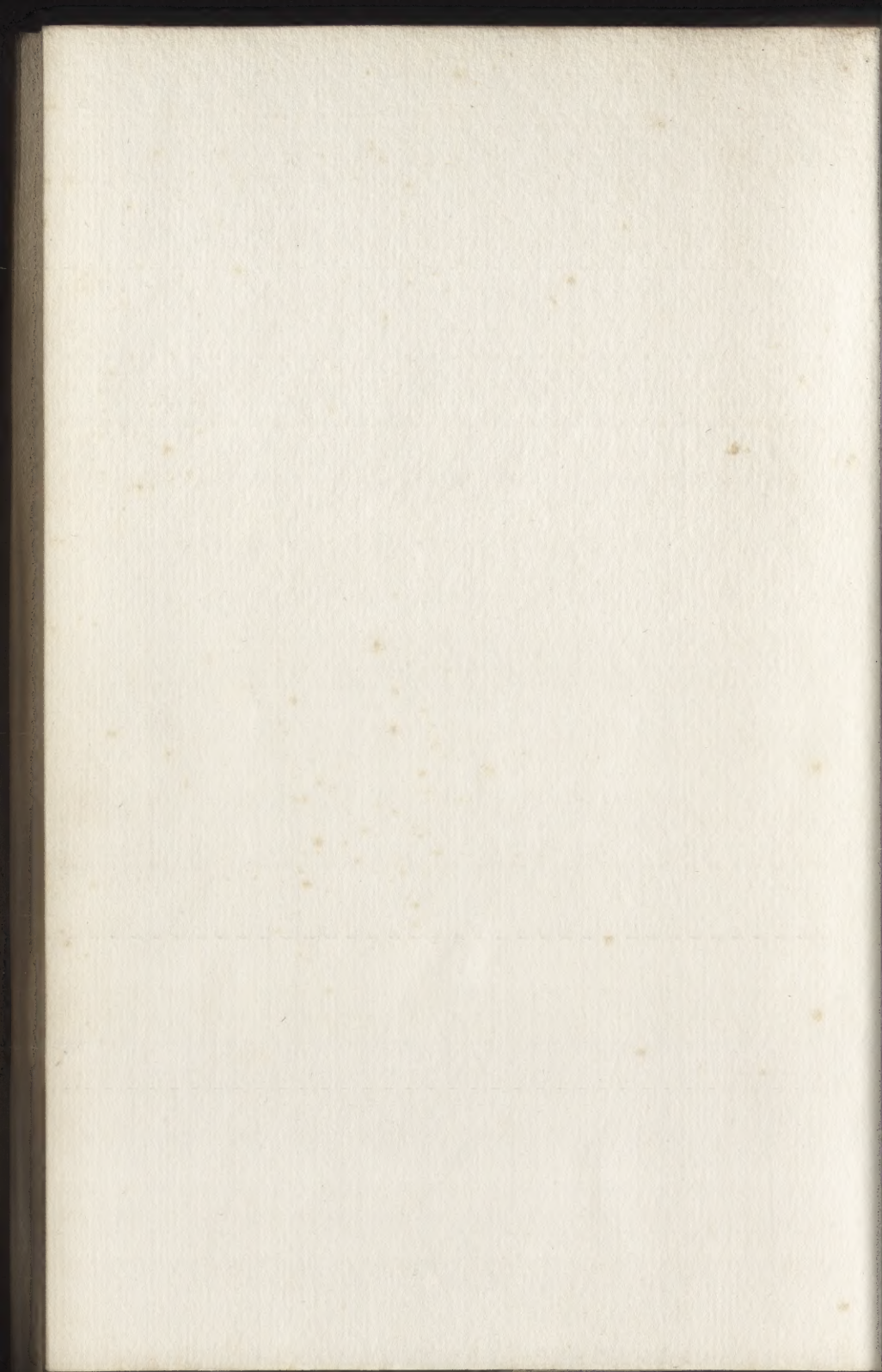


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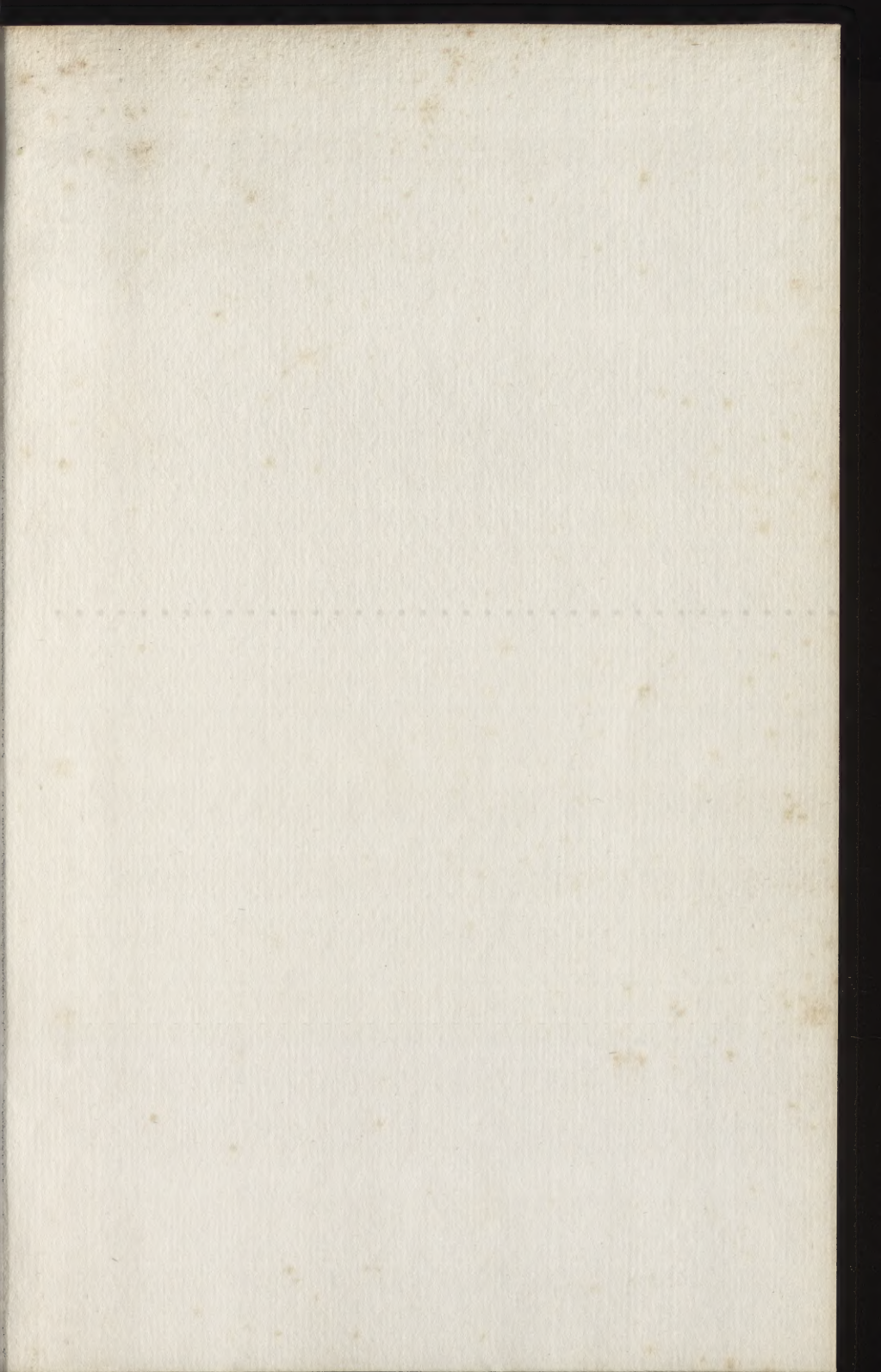


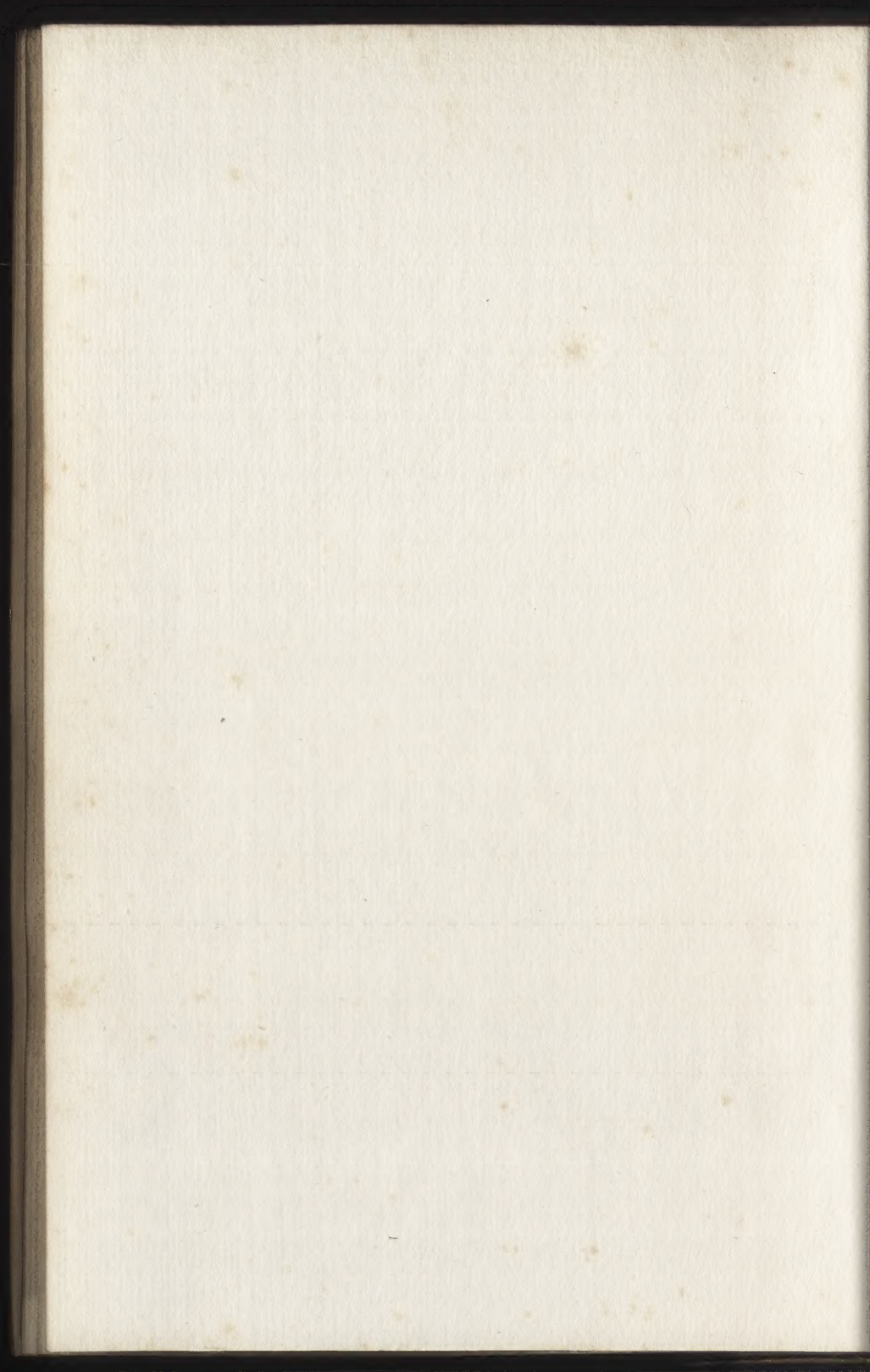














AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BY WIL-  
LIAM MORRIS AT THE DISTRIBUTION  
OF PRIZES TO STUDENTS  
OF THE BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL  
SCHOOL OF ART ON FEB. 21, 1894.





AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BY WILLIAM MORRIS AT THE DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES TO STUDENTS OF THE BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF ART ON FEB. 21, 1894.

IT seems to me that my address falls naturally into two parts: that I have first to speak to the general public about the Art which your School represents, and next I have to speak to the students of the School about their position and aims. As to the first part, I fear some of you may think I am telling an old story once more; a story of which you are tired of hearing, if I am not tired of telling it. For, to say the truth, we are not yet quite on the right road towards a satisfactory condition of Art. When I say 'we,' I do not mean this country in especial; for, indeed, at home here we are somewhat better off than in other civilized countries, though at first sight it may not seem so, owing to the fact that in France, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere, there are still more or less survivals from the foregoing periods, during which Art was common to the whole people. But those survivals are being extinguished under our very eyes, and in the course of a few years there will be nothing more interesting, e.g., in the peasant life of Italy, than in that of England or America. All nations of us must go through the mill in which the commercial period is grinding us; and England has at least this advantage: that she was thrown into the hop-

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per first, and as a consequence is showing signs of consciousness that there is a future for Art. In short, we are willing to rebel against the tyranny compounded of utilitarianism and dilettantism, which for the greater part of this century has forbidden all life in Art. Only as yet we do not quite know what form our rebellion is to take; nor do I feel that in this business I can do more than generalize; for, in fact, if we already knew in detail what to do toward the furtherance of Art, that would mean that we were practising Art, & should not want to talk about it: people do not talk about matters that are going smoothly.

As to my generalizations, I can only say, first, that, in order to have a living school of Art, the public in general must be interested in Art; it must be a part of their lives; something which they can no more do without than water or lighting. We must not be able to plead poverty or necessity, as we do now, as an excuse for ugliness or dirt. If we raise a building, whether it be palace, factory, or cottage, it must be a thing well understood that it must be sightly: if a railway has to be run from one place to another, it must be taken for granted that the minimum of destruction of natural beauty must be incurred, even if that should increase the expense of the line largely; disfiguring waste of coal-pits or manufactories must be got rid of, whatever the cost may be; and so on. And, mind you, all this need of real public convenience, which is the only



possible foundation for Art in modern times, is quite possible to be done; and it will be done, so soon as people care about it. To put the matter quite plainly, as things go now we are, as a community, contented to be publicly poor so long as some of us are privately rich; therefore, though the income of the country is enormous in figures, no man of us can go a few yards from his own door without seeing the tokens of quite desperate public poverty. Now I admit that within the last dozen of years there are signs of healthy discontent with this monstrous discrepancy between our powers and our practice; and in one direction, especially, a new spirit has arisen, which, to begin with, has given us instruments through which the revolt against stupid utilitarianism can work. I am alluding to the development of municipal life amongst us. Without flattery, and as a matter of fact, I can say that of course I know how this city has for long taken a leading part in this development. But now we are seeing, what I think some of us scarcely expected to see, London playing its part herein; and that, in spite of its being so weighted by its unmanageable size, & its position as a centre of government, of politics, and of intelligence; that is to say, in spite of its being the very representative, of all places in the world, of the commercial epoch. Whatever mistakes the London County Council has made, or will make, I am sure that it is awake to the fact that it owes to the citizens some account

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of the external decency of our brick-and-mortar county; & there is a feeling in the air (which used to be neither in the air nor anywhere else) that something may be done, even in these passing years, to make life better worth living in London. In short, we Londoners, who were once but citizens of the world, are now learning to be citizens of London also, as we surely ought to be; for, indeed, we have a certain amount of our own business to attend to, as well as other people's business.

All things considered, then, I believe, in a growing sense, that it is a disgrace to a period in which civilized mankind has attained to such mastery over the forces of Nature, that the commonwealth should be poor. Again, I say that such a feeling is, and must be, the basis of modern Art striving to free itself from the thralldom of utilitarianism, and 'the Correggiosity of Correggio.' How are we to work on that basis? In considering the question, I will, for a while, look upon the hopes of Art in these islands as the subject matter; & it is a more than sufficiently big one. And, first, let us dispose of the dictum, which used to be popular in dilettante circles, that the English are essentially a non-artistic people. I must call that a good deal less than a half-truth, & you have only got to go to the first (unrestored) mediæval building you can get at to test that view of the subject. As a matter of fact, until Art failed throughout civilization, the English had a very definite style of Art of their own,



which closely expressed their thoughts and their lives, and of which beauty, almost, it seems to us, unsought for, was an essential part; while as far as our own days go, it is, as I have said before, to non-artistic England that some glimmer of insight into the possible future of Art has come. In short, it is no use going further afield than this country to find the artists and craftsmen that we need: when you find them you will undoubtedly find that they have shortcomings which those of other countries have not; but also they will have their own special excellencies, which we had better make the most of.

Now, further, I believe that the capacity for Art, and the desire for it, are not yet extinct among us; yet they are mostly dormant. People in general, who do not earn their livelihood by using their eyes, do not use them; which, of course, considering the state of the popular arts amongst us, saves them a great deal of suffering, & probably lengthens their lives. But I fear that we cannot leave them to their negative happiness: if we are to make anything of Art, we must awaken in them that 'divine discontent' which is the mother of improvement in mankind. I have already admitted, indeed, that this awakening is beginning; but to me it seems that it is only amongst a very few, and chiefly amongst artists in the narrower sense of the word, that this discontent is the result of the actual use of the eyes. With the others of the discontented, it is

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the result of intelligent reasoning: what might be called political understanding, as opposed to artistic. I do not undervalue this side of things, & it is indeed necessary that those who live chiefly by the eyes, should be able to use their intelligence also in dealing with matters of Art; but, nevertheless, the essential thing is that people generally should be capable of receiving impressions through the eyes, & this process should be a joy to them, just as their receiving impressions from their palates, or their ears. This is, of course, only stating the obvious fact, that the pleasure taken in Art is primarily sensuous; an obvious fact, yet not so obvious but that it is generally forgotten now-a-days.

Well, this being so, the necessity for using our eyes, if we are to be artists, having been admitted, the question comes, How are we to get people to use their eyes, always keeping in mind the fact that for some time after they have begun to do so they will be a torment to themselves and their neighbours? as I am.

That is the real question we have to consider this evening. And I begin to answer it by saying that we who have not lost the use of our eyes should go on pestering the rest of the public until we have more or less convinced them that it would be a good thing for them to recover the capacity of seeing, just as it would be a good thing to recover the use of their legs if they were lame; and remember that, as in the case of eyesight, the non-seeing ones



may plead that if they could see, it would give them trouble and pain, so, in the matter of legs, they might also plead that by gaining the capacity of walking they would incur the pain and labour of going afoot. Birmingham School of Art, 1894.

Well, having convinced our blind neighbours that it is a good thing to see, I think we should have won half the battle; because those who want to see, and do not really lack eyes, but only the habit of using them, can get to see, sooner or later, that is, can acquire the habit of seeing. And we who have not lost that habit are there to help them. Now, I have had a considerable experience in the art of propaganda, & I have, in the course of it, found out this that, having enunciated your first thesis, you must not wait till you have converted all people to that before you put out your second & your third, and proceed to act as if the said first were already accepted. So let us go by this experience now, & assume that we all agree (though we do not) that it is a good thing to have the full use of our eyes, and are prepared to endure the pain, as well as to enjoy the pleasure, which that use will give us; that we are, in short, prepared to accept the responsibility of being human beings in the full possession of healthy senses.

That being accepted, there comes, I say, the question as to how those who have not the use of their eyes, and desire to gain it, can be helped by those who have the said use. A far more difficult ques-

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tion to answer than some of you may think. Nay, a question which cannot be answered unless people are seriously longing to be blind no longer, & are ready to pay the full price, both in money, and in trouble, and disturbance of a quiet life, which that (to my mind) inestimable gain will bring with it.

Now, I say that there are two things to be done by the seers for the non-seers: the first is to show them what is to be seen on the earth; and the next to give them opportunities for producing matters, the sight of which will please themselves & their neighbours, and the people that come after them. To train them, in short, in the observation and creation of beauty and incident.

What, then, is worth seeing on the earth? In one word, everything: this to love and foster, and that to hate and destroy. The results of the greed, tyranny, and injustice of man, of his folly, as the old Jew called it, these must be looked at in the face, as well as the results of his aspirations & his love. It is not to be lamented, but rejoiced in, that all those evil deeds of man, which I should sum up in the one word unneighbourliness, should leave their stain upon the Art which has struggled through them, or should leave the aching void of no-art when their slavery has been strong enough to destroy it; and, moreover, the disgust and grief with which we must regard these disgraces will, when we know the causes of them, give us assured hope



of the reward of fresh pleasure of the eyes that will accompany every casting off of the follies which still beset us. Birmingham School of Art, 1894.

But to-day I will not say much of those things which the eyes bid us hate, all the more as this is a festive occasion, and as also one ought to have more to say on the things which the eyes bid us to love, and which are less understood than the horrors above-said. Of these things which we of the present day ought especially to turn our eyes to for pleasure, there are, I take it, two kinds: the beauties of Nature, & the beauties of Art. Of the first, considered purely by themselves, I will say little: mainly this, that our fault in respect of regarding these is that for the most part we refuse to pay attention to anything in Nature which is not tremendous and exciting; it must be an Alpine pass, or a rocky sea shore, or the richness & luxury of an Italian landscape, or at the least a piece of mountain in Scotland or Wales: less than that will scarcely draw our eyes to beholding. Now, who would not be moved at such scenes as these? Yet, I must tell you that, if you can get no pleasure out of the sight of a Warwickshire meadow, or the hedgerows and little waving hills of my native Essex, or the flat fields and limestone banks of my adopted Oxfordshire-Berkshire land, I say, if these be nothing to you I doubt your capacity for really seeing the huge Swiss mountain and valley scenery, or the flank of the Apennine, or

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the fairy-land of the Guarda Lake, or the terror of the Thrasymene. In short, what our modern landscape visitors usually fail to see, is a certain something which we call 'character,' which does not depend on either bigness, or roughness, or richness; a something which means the expression of a human interest, the telling of a tale of life and incident, one may say, the touching the imagination through the eye. Here, then, is already a gain for the purblind, if we can give them this faculty of seeing character in landscape; indeed, a far greater gain than the mere words just spoken can give you any idea of. By dint of this gain, almost every 'flat & uninteresting country' (as the phrase goes) is all changed, and becomes a fairy-land full of beauty and interest; & the lead of our ordinary English landscape becomes pure gold. Indeed, I will promise to any one of you that goes with open eyes some month or two hence into any unspoiled country-side, that you will find almost every field's end a paradise that will cry out to you in a voice not to be resisted: 'Love the earth which you dwell upon, and the soil which nourishes you.'

And, surely, when we have gained by the use of our eyes such ineffable pleasure as this, we shall no longer plead poverty for failing to keep this inheritance of our fathers free from spoiling and degradation; we shall not allow the passing convenience of the minute to deprive us all of what at



least should be public property, to wit, the beauty of the face of the land.

Now perhaps you will say that, even so far, I have not been speaking of the simple unblended works of Nature. That is true. In all old civilized countries, even when we are in the country, out of sight of a single house, the aspect of the place is largely influenced by the work of man: the hedge-rows, the road, the lanes leading out of it, the trees which have all been planted by men's hands, the growing crops, the tame beasts and sheep, the banked & locked river, all these go to making up the loveliness which lies before us. But, besides all that, it is seldom in England that we can be out of sight of a house, never out of memory of one seen but a little while ago. So here we are brought at once to that transition between works of Nature and of Art, wherein each plays its own part, and which, when they are happily harmonized, produce the greatest pleasure that the eye can have, & appeal most directly to the imagination. For in these landscapes, which include building, we have before us history in its most delightful, and even, I will say, its most instructive, shape. And, furthermore, in such landscapes England (in all countryside which have not been ruined by our artificial poverty) is fruitful; for both the circumstances of life in the middle ages in England, and the genius of our forefathers led them specially to what I should call the embroidery of the general face of

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the country. If we lacked, as we did, the romance of the great walled towns of the continent, we had as a compensation abundance of ancient villages with their small but beautiful churches, full of individuality and character, and their generously-built manor houses & homesteads, which, between them all, once made an English country-side a special treasure not to be seen anywhere else. And grievous as has been the injury to this treasure-store, much as we have been robbed of it by our own folly and blindness, there is still enough of it left to teach us and delight us. And, mind you, here I am not speaking of the magnificent cathedrals of England, or the beautiful ruins of those vast monastic houses which still exist in the Yorkshire valleys, & elsewhere: those, like the mountains and lakes aforesaid are, I will not say generally valued, but at least generally catalogued by the public; but I am speaking of the familiar houses and little country churches which are scattered all over the land, most of the former of course not being actually mediæval, but traditionally fit and beautiful. Here, again, I say, if you do not feel the beauty of the little grey cottage, which has stood so many storms and evil days, and is still sound and trim; or of the little village church, brimful of the history of six centuries, you cannot feel that of the stately cathedral. And these, above all things, we want to get people to see with their eyes, and to value according to the amount of pleasure which



they will get from them when their eyes are open. Birmingham School of Art, 1894.  
And, once again, as in the case of the fields & woods and hillsides, when they are in the full enjoyment of this pleasure, surely they will not forgo it for fear of that artificial poverty, which is an affair as purely conventional as the beauty of our ancient buildings is real & substantial. Yet you must not suppose that I am an advocate of the tumble-down picturesque. Keep your village houses weather-tight, trim, and useful; and where you must, build others beside them: but why, when you build these, should you make them specimens of the worst buildings in the worst suburbs of a modern town? Even in the passing day, if you build them solidly and unpretentiously, using good materials natural to their own country-side, & if you do not stint the tenant of due elbow-room & garden, it is little likely that you will have done any offence to the beauty of the country-side or the older houses in it. Indeed, I have a hope that it will be from such necessary, unpretentious buildings that the new and genuine architecture will spring, rather than from our experiments in conscious style more or less ambitious, or those for which the immortal Dickens has given us the never-to-be-forgotten adjective 'Architectooralooral.'

Now this matter of the proper understanding of Architecture is at the present moment of such overwhelming importance in the consideration of the future of the Arts that I must say a few more words

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about it, even though it be in parenthesis. I mean, in plain terms, that the manner in which our buildings, and especially our houses, are built is really the foundation of the whole question of Art; and that, if we cannot build fit and beautiful (not necessarily highly decorated) houses, we cannot have Art at all in our days. Reflect on it! A picture may be hidden in a drawing-room; a book may remain unopened on a library shelf; a drawing or engraving shut up in a portfolio; but a house is always in evidence to injure every passer-by by its badness, or benefit him by its goodness. Neither can any work of Art, not even the greatest work of Art, a beautiful woman, look well in a bad house. Now that being the case, and our modern houses being undeniably, and even, it would seem, wilfully, bad, for the most part, let us, I beg of you once more, take every care of our old buildings, which are good. I say every care: not only do not pull them down in the interest of railways, manufactories, public-houses, and the like; but mend them so as to keep them weather-tight, and then leave them genuine. The history of what is called 'restoration,' of which I really must say a few words, gives such a curious instance of the non-use of the eyesight, that, apart from other matters, it quite belongs to the question.

From the time of Elizabeth to that of George IV the people of this country (indeed, of all Europe), though they had certain architectural (or at times



architectooral) tastes, were not in the least moved by the masterpieces of Mediæval Art; in point of fact, since they did not use their eyes on them, and since they were rejoicing at first in their newly-recovered treasure of classical learning, and later on in the acquirement of science so-called, they considered these mouldering heaps of stone to be mere relics of barbarism. In passing, I may say that the French travels of that very shrewd man of business and very complete Philistine, Arthur Young, give us an excellent measure of this stupidity. About the beginning of this century, a few people began to open their eyes to Mediæval Art, of whom by far the most remarkable was Walter Scott; and his obviously genuine love for these works, combined with the conventional idea that they were 'barbarous,' produced some curious and amusing passages in his books. However, admiration for the Gothic buildings grew, till at last people began to think that they would like to have some more like them, and tried it with very small success, though they were mightily pleased by their attempts. Again came a period which learned so much more about the Gothic style, as it was once called, that great and successful architects practised in it, producing buildings which did no great harm, when they did not take the place of old buildings. But in another direction this new knowledge had very bad consequences. By this time our ancient buildings, having been

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both neglected & ill-treated by many generations, needed serious repair in many cases. The distinguished architects abovesaid undertook these repairs, and, as repairs, often did them very well. But they also undertook to re-do literally those parts which the neglect and stupidity aforesaid had injured or even obliterated, and seemed to have no doubt that they could do so. And they knew so much about the old buildings & the ways of their builders, that I cannot much wonder at their temerity. But what I do rather wonder at is, that they did not see, when they had thus 'restored' old work, that it did not look right; that, though their mouldings were identical of section with those of the 13th century, and though their carved foliage & figures were 'accurately' (Heaven help us!) copied from casts of that period, they did not look in the least like 13th century work; nay, that they could not build a plain wall at all like 13th century masons. I say that, if they had had the due use of their eyes, they would have seen this at once, and then fallen to reason as to why it was so; in which case, they would surely soon have found out that there were abundant reasons against the possibility of imitating the ancient work: the principal one being that since that time the whole structure of society has altered, and the position of the workman changed; that the long chain of tradition which was unbroken till the end of the middle ages has been snapped. And if they had once had



even a doubt that this was so, surely they would have held their hands, remembering the fatal risk they ran, if perchance they were wrong, of destroying that which they could never have again, the living expression of the very heart & soul of their ancestors. Unhappily they never brought their quasi-knowledge to the test of their eyesight, and therefore they have found their knowledge hopelessly insufficient to deal with the difficulties which have beset them, and the result has been that they have most seriously injured all the great cathedrals of England, & almost destroyed some; while of the parish churches, it is only here & there that one comes across one which has had only to contend against neglect and the 'churchwardenism' of the last two centuries, and has not had added to the conspiracy against its life the well-meant but disastrous attacks of the restorers. Now I appeal to you with some hope as intelligent, and in this case unprejudiced, observers, to help to put an end to this folly of restoration. If the guardians of old buildings are careful of the stability of these buildings, & will take care, and great and constant care, to preserve what they have got, they may safely leave the question of restoring them to what they have never been to a period when we have at last conquered a genuine style of architecture of our own, and let that age settle the question. I have no fear of the way in which they would settle it. I have no doubt that they would look upon these

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buildings as sacred relics of the older days, whose tradition they had at last caught hold on, & whose suggestions they had developed in the period of their own genuine creations.

Meantime it seems to me there is another way in which the restorers neglect the evidence of their eyes as to the beauty of an old building. The buildings of the middle ages, especially those of what we may call the Northern Gothic, are far too sturdy and rational to be injured by fair wear and tear. Often, no doubt, some subsidence of the soil, or what not, may endanger an old building; but always, if it is well looked after, the said danger can be met by the engineering skill of the day, and the building may be made absolutely sound without any tampering with its surface; or a defective stone may be replaced by a new one where it is structurally necessary; but the surface in such buildings is so far from being damaged by the action of wind and weather, that, on the contrary, it adds a beauty to it: adds a beauty to its original beauties, mind. The lapse of time will not turn a bad building into a good, any more than it will turn bad wine into good, but it will most often make a good building very much more beautiful; because it will assimilate it to the surrounding nature, until it seems at last scarcely to have been made, but rather to have grown up from the very soil, an unartificial, inevitable growth. That any man should ever have ventured to risk the vulgarizing of all this accumulated



beauty, history, & romance for the sake of a piece of barren pedantry, fills me with a wonder that I have never been able to get over.

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To guard our ancient buildings jealously, therefore, against brutal destruction and egotistical falsification, seems to me to be one of the prime duties of those who are trying to make people use their eyes; for if people cannot see these, they can see nothing, & they should acknowledge their defect and leave the dealing with such works to those whose eyesight is not defective.

Now I have gone over a few of the points with which it is necessary to deal, in considering how we are to get people to see Art, & the materials of Art. Of course I do not pretend that I have exhausted even the list of subjects; still I feel sure that by the time people have begun to see the face of the earth, and the works of mankind upon it that were done spontaneously, and with a pleasure which is still obvious upon them, they will find it necessary to do their share in the production of such works, & be impelled toward creation.

And that word brings me to what I have to say more particularly to the Art-students here present; for, unless you are acting in pure error, you have, in establishing & in fostering a School of Art here, accepted the position that it is desirable that people should be taught to use their eyes, & that, when they have learned to do that, in ever so little a degree, the natural result must be an irrepressible de-

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sire to create works of art. And in the first place let medwell upon these words: An irrepressible desire to create. I always have warned, and always shall warn, when I have the opportunity, young people against looking on the practice of the arts as a mere profession, a career to be chosen for the earning of livelihood. I am often consulted on this point, and my answer is always the same: 'If you are quite sure that you have got in you the irrepressible desire, you need no test of capacity to begin with; you will yourself know that you have in you some power of creation; in that case do not hesitate, but throw yourself into it for better or worse, and take what will come. But if you do not feel that you have the capacity or desire, then, by all means, if you can, study Art as a recreation or a piece of education, but do not pledge yourself to live by it; for, if you do, you will be a burden to Art, & will, if you have the insight which a serious person ought to have, feel yourself to be in a false and ignominious position.' Now, this warning is more necessary than you may think, because most men who have any character or strength of will, can, by concentration and diligence, learn the practice of a profession for which they are not really fit; & this very commonly happens in the arts, and produces men who, as far as the arts are concerned, are mere mechanical pretenders, though not necessarily so wilfully. So, I say, make yourself sure that you have in you the essentials of an artist before you study Art as



a handicraft by which to earn your bread. But, a-  
gain, if you are able to do this, & become a genuine  
handicraftsman, I congratulate you on your posi-  
tion, whatever else may happen to you, for you  
then belong to the only group of people in civili-  
zation which is really happy: persons whose ne-  
cessary daily work is inseparable from their great-  
est pleasure. But, if I may sermonize you for a mo-  
ment, remember that noblesse oblige: with such  
happy people as you are, we cannot put up with  
the follies and dishonesties which we forgive to less  
fortunate people, bishops, & prime ministers, and  
generals, and landowners, and great capitalists, &  
the like. You must be absolutely faithful to your  
Art, and, though I do not ask you to judge other  
artists severely, you must be hard with yourselves;  
and, though you may never be able to do your best,  
yet you must aim at doing so, and, I say, take your-  
selves, your better selves, for your judges, and not  
people who know nothing about Art, and whom  
you may easily hoodwink. Your position as mod-  
ern artists makes this all the more imperative on  
you. To the mediæval craftsman generally, orna-  
ment was only incidental. If his ornament was not  
good (which by the way it almost always was), at  
least he was making a shoe, or a knife, or a cup, or  
what not, as well as ornament. But you who make  
nothing but ornament, please to remember that a  
piece of white paper, or an oak panel, is a pretty  
thing, and, don't spoil it. Well, that is all the ser-

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monizing. As to how you are to set to work, I can but give you a few disjointed hints as to my opinions, which kindly take for what they are worth. It is clear to me that you have amongst you those who are using their eyes well in the direction of that sympathy with characteristic landscape which I spoke of before. This is already much; a whole school can be founded on such observation & sympathy, and again, as above said, such a school may have quite important results in teaching the general public to see. Now, I dare say you are being told that you are getting mannered; attend to that warning, though it may in some people's mouths mean nothing except that they have no eyes for the ornamental side of Art. The corrective to overmuch manner is, first, diligent study of Nature, and, secondly, intelligent study of the work of the ages of Art. The third corrective is infallible if you have it; but you cannot all have it; it is imagination. But, at least, if you have not got it, do not pretend to it; or you had better give up Art altogether. Again, you will, I know, do things which will be called hard; you must look into that, but I will tell you that a design may be very clear and precise without being hard. I remember, e.g., the early nights in Iceland, where there was no shadow, and all was so clear that you could see every cranny in the mountains ten miles off, as if you could touch them, but there was nothing hard in it all. The hardness comes, I think, from using ugly lines,

wiry or edgy, or from over-shading, not from precision. Now, a word as to colour. One can only give warnings against possible faults; it is clearly impossible to teach colour by words, even ever so little of it, though it can be taught in a workshop, at least partially. Well, I should say, be rather restrained than over-luxurious in colour, or you weary the eye. Do not attempt over-refinements in colour, but be frank and simple. If you look at the pieces of colouring that most delight you in ornamental work, as, e.g., a Persian carpet, or an illuminated book of the middle ages, and analyze its elements, you will, if you are not used to the work, be surprised at the simplicity of it, the few tints used, the modesty of the tints, and therewithal the clearness & precision of all boundary lines. In all fine flat colouring, there are regular systems of dividing colour from colour. Above all, don't attempt iridescent blendings of colour, which look like decomposition. They are about as much as possible the reverse of useful.

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As to those of you who are designing figure work, I would say, Do not spare yourselves in drawing from the living model, draped as well as undraped; in fact, draw drapery continually, for remember that the beauty of your design must largely depend on the design of the drapery. What you should aim at is to get so familiar with all this that you can at last make your design with ease, and something like certainty, without drawing from



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models in the first draught, though you should make studies from nature afterwards. This, no doubt, is very familiar advice to you, so I will try to finish with something which is not quite so dead a platitude, and ask you to consider it. I have always noticed, in good mediæval designs, a peculiar kind of interest and ornamental quality, which is quite lacking in most of those of the Renaissance and of modern times. And this seems to me to be caused by the planes of the figures being very near each other in the mediæval designs, and their being separated from each other by long perspectives in the later periods, which latter method produces an emptiness and lack of interest which destroy all ornamental effect. When you go up to London, get over, if you can, to Hampton Court, and you will find a good example of what I mean there. The great hall, & the solar or drawing room are both hung with fine tapestries: those in the hall are of the Renaissance period, and fully illustrate this fault of emptiness; those in the solar are of the Gothic period, & each piece is quite stuffed with beautifully-draped figures. The hall tapestries look dull and vulgar, the solar tapestries full of interest and incident, and are the best possible ornament for the walls. The contrast is well worth noting, as both sets are fine of their kind.

Well, if I were to go on saying all I really have to say, there would be no end to it. So I will end with saying that I, an old man now, have been much

encouraged with what I have seen of the enthusiasm, & aspirations toward the right road, of the Birmingham School of Art during the last few years, & I beg you to go on encouraging us of the last generation, so that the next after you may need no encouragement save what they will get from their own work, the pleasure of creating beautiful things, which is the greatest pleasure in the world. Birmingham School of Art, 1894.

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ART AND THE BEAUTY OF THE  
EARTH. BY WILLIAM MORRIS.



ART AND THE BEAUTY OF THE  
EARTH. A LECTURE DELIVERED  
BY WILLIAM MORRIS AT BURSLEM  
TOWN HALL ON OCTOBER 13, 1881.

WE are here in the midst of a population busied about a craft which may be called the most ancient in the world, a craft which I look upon with the greatest interest, as I well may, since, except perhaps the noble craft of house-building, it is second to none other. And in the midst of this industrious population, engaged in making goods of such importance to our households, I am speaking to a School of Art, one of the bodies that were founded all over the country at a time when it was felt there was something wrong as between the two elements that go to make anything which can be correctly described as a work of industrial art, namely the utilitarian and the artistic elements. I hope nothing I may say to-night will make you think that I under-value the importance of these places of instruction; on the contrary, I believe them to be necessary to us, unless we are prepared to give up all attempt to unite these two elements of use and beauty.

Now, though no man can be more impressed with the importance of the art of pottery than I am, and though I have not, I hope, neglected the study of it from the artistic or historico-artistic side, I do not think myself bound to follow up the subject of your especial art; not so much because



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I know no more of the technical side of it than I have thought enough to enable me to understand it from the above-said historico-artistic side; but rather because I feel it almost impossible to dissociate one of the ornamental arts from the others, as things go now-a-days. Neither do I think I should interest you much, still less instruct you, if I were to recapitulate the general rules that ought to guide a designer for the industrial arts; at the very first foundation of these schools the instructors in them formulated those rules clearly & satisfactorily, and I think they have since been accepted generally, at least in theory. What I do really feel myself bound to do is to speak to you of certain things that are never absent from my thoughts, certain considerations on the condition and prospects of the arts in general, the neglect of which conditions would drive us in time into a strange state of things indeed; a state of things under which no potter would put any decoration on his pots, and indeed, if a man of strict logical mind, would never know of what shape to make a pot, unless the actual use it was to be put to drove him in one direction or another. What I have to say on these matters will not, I fear, be very new to you, and perhaps it may more or less offend you; but I will beg you to believe that I feel deeply the honour you have done me in asking me to address you. I cannot doubt you have asked me to do so that you might hear what I may chance to

think on the subject of the arts, and it seems to me, therefore, that I should ill repay you for that honour, and be treating you unworthily, if I were to stand here and tell you at great length what I do not think. So I will ask your leave and license to speak plainly, as I promise I will not speak lightly.

Yet I would not have you think I underrate the difficulty of the art of plain speaking, an art as difficult, perhaps, as that of pottery, and not nearly so much of it done in the world; so what I will ask you to forgive me if I wound your feelings in any way will not be my downright meaning, my audacious and rash thought, but rather my clumsy way of expressing it; and in truth I expect to have your forgiveness, since in my heart I believe that a plain word spoken because it must be said, free from malice or self-seeking, can be no lasting offence to any one, whereas, what end is there to the wrong and damage that come of half-hearted speech, of words spoken in vagueness, hypocrisy, and cowardice?

You who in these parts make such hard, smooth, well-compacted, and enduring pottery understand well that you must give it other qualities besides those which make it fit for ordinary use. You must profess to make it beautiful as well as useful, and if you did not you would certainly lose your market. That has been the view the world has taken of your art, & of all the industrial arts

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Lecture II. since the beginning of history, and, as I said, is  
Art and the held to this day, whether from the force of habit  
Beauty of or otherwise.  
the Earth.

Nevertheless, so different is the position of art in our daily lives from what it used to be that it seems to me, (and I am not alone in my thought), that the world is hesitating as to whether it shall take art home to it or cast it out.

I feel that I am bound to explain what may seem a very startling as it is assuredly a very serious statement. I will do so in as few words as I can. I do not know whether a sense of the great change which has befallen the arts in modern times has come home to most, or indeed to many, of you; a change which has only culminated in quite recent times within the lives of many of you present. It may seem to you that there has been no break in the chain of art, at all events since it began to struggle out of the confusion & barbarism of the early middle ages; you may think that there has been gradual change in it, growth, improvement (not always perhaps readily recognized at first, that latter), but that all this has taken place without violence or breakdown, & that the growth & improvement are still going on.

And this seems a very reasonable view to take of it, & is analogous beyond doubt to what has happened on other sides of human progress; nay, it is on this ground that your pleasure in art is founded, & your hopes for its future. That foun-



dation for hope has failed some of us; on what our hopes are founded to-day I may be able to tell you partly this evening, but I will now give you a glimpse of the abyss into which our earlier hope tumbled.

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Let us look back a little to the early middle ages, the days of barbarism and confusion. As you follow the pages of the keen-eyed, cool-headed Gibbon, you may well think that the genius of the great historian has been wasted over the mean squabbles, the bald self-seeking, the ignoble superstition, the pomp and the cruelty of the kings and scoundrels who are the chief persons named in the story; yet also you cannot fail to know, when you come to think of it, that the story has not been fully told; nay scarce told at all, only a chance hint given, here and there. The palace and the camp were but a small part of their world surely; and outside them you may be sure that faith & heroism and love were at work, or what birth could there have been from those days? For the visible tokens of that birth you must seek in the art that grew up and flourished amid that barbarism and confusion, and you know who wrought it. The tyrants, and pedants, & bullies of the time paid dog's wages for it, & bribed their gods with it, but they were too busy over other things to make it; the nameless people wrought it; for no names of its makers are left, not one. Their work only is left, & all that came of it, & all that is to come of it.

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What came of it first was the complete freedom of art in the midst of a society that had at least begun to free itself from religious & political fetters. Art was no longer now, as in Egypt of olden time, kept rigidly within certain prescribed bounds that no fancy might play with, no imagination overpass, lest the majesty of the beautiful symbols might be clouded and the memory of the awful mysteries they symbolized become dim in the hearts of men. Nor was it any longer as in the Greece of Pericles, wherein no thought might be expressed that could not be expressed in perfect form. Art was free. Whatever a man thought of, that he might bring to light by the labour of his hands, to be praised and wondered at by his fellows. Whatever man had thought in him of any kind, & skill in him of any kind to express it, he was deemed good enough to be used for his own pleasure & the pleasure of his fellows; in this art nothing & nobody was wasted; all people east of the Atlantic felt this art; from Bokhara to Galway, from Iceland to Madras, all the world glittered with its brightness and quivered with its vigour. It cast down the partitions of race & religion also. Christian and Mussulman were made joyful by it; Kelt, Teuton, & Latin raised it up together; Persian, Tartar, and Arab gave and took its gifts from one another. Considering how old the world is it was not too long-lived at its best. In the days when Norwegian, Dane, and Iclander stalked

through the streets of Micklegarth, and hedged with their axes the throne of Kirialax the Greek king, it was alive & vigorous. When blind Dandolo was led from the Venetian galleys on to the conquered wall of Constantinople, it was near to its best & purest days. When Constantine Palæologus came back an old and care-worn man from a peacefuller home in the Morea to his doom in the great city, and the last Cæsar got the muddle of his life solved, not ingloriously, by Turkish swords on the breached and battered walls of that same Constantinople, there were signs of sickness beginning to show in the art that sprang from there to cover east and west alike with its glory.

And all that time it was the art of free men. Whatever slavery still existed in the world (more than enough, as always) art had no share in it; & still it was only here & there that any great names rose above the host of those that wrought it. These names (& it was mainly in Italy only) came to the front when those branches of it that were the work of collective rather than individual genius, architecture especially, had quite reached their highest perfection. Men began to look round for something more startlingly new than the slow, gradual change of architecture & the attendant lesser arts could give them. This change they found in the glorious work of the painters, & they received it with an out-spoken excitement and joy that seems

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Lecture II. strange indeed to us in these days when art is held  
Art and the so cheap.

Beauty of All went better than well for a time; though in  
the Earth. Italy architecture began to lose something of the  
perfection it had gained, yet it was scarcely to be  
noticed amidst the glory of the light that was in-  
creasing in painting and sculpture. In France and  
England meantime the change, as it was slower  
in growing to a head, so it had begun earlier, as  
witness the sculpture in the great French Churches,  
and the exquisite drawing of the illuminations of  
English books; while the Flemings, never very great  
in the art of building, towards the end of this period  
had found their true vocation as painters of a sweet  
and serious external naturalism, illuminated by colour  
unsurpassed for purity and brightness.

So had the art of the middle ages climbed gradually  
to the top of the hill, doubtless not without carrying  
the seeds of the disease that was to end it, threatenings  
of great change which no doubt no one heeded at the  
time. Nor was there much to wonder at in their  
blindness, since still for centuries to come their art  
was full of life & splendour, & when at last its death  
drew near men could see in it nothing but the hope of  
a new life. For many years, a hundred years at least,  
before the change really showed itself, the expression  
of the greater thoughts that art can deal with was  
being made more difficult to men not specially learned. With-

out demanding the absolute perfection that was the rule in the days of Greece, people began to look for an intricacy of treatment that the Greeks had never dreamed of; men began to see hopes of realizing scenes of history & poetry in a far more complete way than the best of their forerunners had attempted. Yet for long the severance between artist and artizan (as our nicknames go) was not obvious, though doubtless things were leading up to it; it is, perhaps, noticeable chiefly in the difference between the work of nation and nation rather than among the individual workmen. I mean, for instance, that in the thirteenth century England was going step by step with Italy as far as mere excellence is concerned, while in the middle of the fifteenth England was rude, and Italy cultured; and even while the change was preparing, by one accident or another came a great access of discoveries of the art and literature of the ancient world, &, as it were, fate ran to meet the half-expressed longings of men.

Then, indeed, all hesitation was over, and suddenly, as it now seems to us, amidst a blaze of glory, the hoped-for new birth took place. Once, as I have said, the makers of beautiful things passed away nameless; but under the Renaissance there are more names of excellent craftsmen left to us than a good memory can well remember, & among those names are the greatest the world has ever known, or perhaps ever will know. No

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Lecture II. Art and the Beauty of the Earth. wonder men's exultation rose high; no wonder that their pride blinded them & that they did not know where they were; yet most pitiable and sad the story is. It was one of those strange times when men seem to themselves to have pierced through all the space which lies between longing and attainment. They, it seems, and no others, have at last reached the spot where lie heaped together all the treasures of the world, vainly sought aforetime. They, it seems, have everything, & no one of those that went before them had anything, nay, not even their fathers whose bones lie yet unrotted under the turf.

The men of the Renaissance looked at the thousand years behind them as a deedless blank, & at all that lay before them as a perpetual triumphal march. We, taught so much by other people's failures, can see their position otherwise than that. We can see that while up to that time, since art first began, it had always looked forward, now it was looking backward; that whereas once men were taught to look through the art at that which the art represented, they were now taught to deem the art an end in itself, & that it mattered nothing whether the story it told was believed or not. Once its aim was to see, now its aim was to be seen only. Once it was done to be understood, & to be helpful to all men: now the vulgar were beyond the pale, & the insults which the Greek slave-holders and the Roman tax-sweaters of old cast upon the



people, upon all men but a chosen few, were brought forth & tricked up again in fantastic guise to adorn the day of boundless hope.

Not all this, indeed, came at once, but come it did, nor very slowly either, when men once began to look back. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the new birth was in its hey-day. Before the seventeenth had quite begun, what had become of its over-weening hopes? In Venice alone of all Italy was any art being done that was of any worth. The conquered North had gained nothing from Italy save an imitation of its worst extravagance, and all that saved the art of England from nothingness was a tradition of the earlier days still lingering among a people rustic and narrow-minded indeed, but serious, truthful, & of simple habits.

I have just spoken somewhat of how this came about. But what was at the bottom of it, and what I wish you chiefly to note and remember is this, that the men of the Renaissance lent all their energies, consciously or unconsciously, to the severance of art from the daily lives of men, and that they brought it to pass, if not utterly in their own days, yet speedily and certainly. I must remind you, though I, and better men than I, have said it over & over again, that once every man that made anything made it a work of art besides a useful piece of goods, whereas now, only a very few things have even the most distant claim to be considered works

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of art. I beg you to consider that most carefully and seriously, & to try to think what it means.

But first, lest any of you doubt it, let me ask you what forms the great mass of the objects that fill our museums, setting aside positive pictures and sculpture? Is it not just the common household goods of past time? True it is that some people may look upon them simply as curiosities, but you and I have been taught most properly to look upon them as priceless treasures that can teach us all sorts of things, and yet, I repeat, they are for the most part common household goods, wrought by "common fellows," as people say now, without any cultivation, men who thought the sun went round the earth, & that Jerusalem was exactly in the middle of the world.

Again, take another museum that we have still left us, our country churches. Take note of them, I say, to see how art ran through every thing; for you must not let the name of "church" mislead you: in times of real art people built their churches in just the same style as their houses; "ecclesiastical art" is an invention of the last thirty years. Well, I myself am just fresh from an out-of-the-way part of the country near the end of the navigable Thames, where, within a radius of five miles, are some half-dozen tiny village churches, every one of which is a beautiful work of art, with its own individuality. These are the works of the Thames-side country bumpkins, as you would

call us, nothing grander than that. If the same sort of people were to design and build them now, (since within the last fifty years or so they have lost all the old traditions of building, though they clung to them longer than most people), they could not build anything better than the ordinary little plain Nonconformist chapels that one sees scattered about new neighbourhoods. That is what they correspond with, not an architect-designed new Gothic church. The more you study archæology the more certain you will become that I am right in this, and that what we have left us of earlier art was made by the unhelped people. Neither will you fail to see that it was made intelligently and with pleasure.

That last word brings me to a point so important that at the risk of getting wearisome I must add it to my old sentence and repeat the whole. Time was when everybody that made anything made a work of art besides a useful piece of goods, and it gave them pleasure to make it. That is an assertion from which nothing can drive me; whatever I doubt, I have no doubt of that. And, sirs, if there is anything in the business of my life worth doing, if I have any worthy aspiration, it is the hope that I may help to bring about the day when we shall be able to say, So it was once, so it is now.

Do not misunderstand me; I am not a mere praiser of past times. I know that in those days of which I speak life was often rough & evil enough, beset

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Lecture II. by violence, superstition, ignorance, slavery; yet  
Art and the I cannot help thinking that sorely as poor folks  
Beauty of needed a solace, they did not altogether lack one,  
the Earth. & that solace was pleasure in their work. Ah, sirs,  
much as the world has won since then, I do not  
think it has won for all men such perfect happiness  
that we can afford to cast aside any solace that  
nature holds forth to us. Or must we for ever be  
casting out one devil by another? Shall we never  
make a push to get rid of the whole pack of them  
at once?

I do not mean to say that all the work we do now  
is done without any pleasure, but I mean to say  
that the pleasure is rather that of conquering a good  
spell of work, a courageous and good feeling cer-  
tainly, or of bearing up well under the burden, &  
seldom, very seldom, comes to the pitch of com-  
pelling the workman, out of the fulness of his  
heart, to impress on the work itself the tokens of  
his manly pleasure.

Nor will our system of organizing the work allow  
of it. In almost all cases there is no sympathy be-  
tween the designer and the man who carries out  
the design; not unseldom the designer also is  
driven to work in a mechanical, down-hearted kind  
of way, and I don't wonder at it. I know by ex-  
perience that the making of design after design,  
mere diagrams, mind you, without oneself execut-  
ing them, is a great strain upon the mind. It is  
necessary, unless all workmen of all grades are to

be permanently degraded into machines, that the hand should rest the mind as well as the mind the hand. And I say that this is the kind of work which the world has lost, supplying its place with the work which is the result of the division of labour.

That work, whatever else it can do, cannot produce art, which must, as long as the present system lasts, be entirely confined to such works as are the work from beginning to end of one man: pictures, independent sculpture, and the like. As to these, on the one hand, they cannot fill the gap which the loss of popular art has made, nor can they, especially the more imaginative of them, receive the sympathy which should be their due. I must speak plainly and say that as things go it is impossible for anyone who is not highly educated to understand the higher kind of pictures. Nay, I believe most people receive very little impression indeed from any pictures but those which represent the scenes with which they are thoroughly familiar. The aspect of this as regards people in general is to my mind much more important than that which has to do with the unlucky artist; but he also has some claim upon our consideration; & I am sure that this lack of the general sympathy of simple people weighs very heavily on him, and makes his work feverish and dreamy, or crabbed and perverse.

No, be sure if the people is sick its leaders also have need of healing. Art will not grow and flourish

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Lecture II.    ish, nay, it will not long exist, unless it be shared  
Art and the    by all people; and for my part I don't wish that  
Beauty of    it should.  
the Earth.    Therefore it is that I stand before you to say that

the world has in these days to choose whether she will have art or leave it, and that we also, each one of us, have to make up our minds which camp we will or can join, those that honestly accept art or those that honestly reject it.

Once more let me try to put into words what these two alternatives mean. If you accept it, it must be part of your daily lives, and the daily life of every man. It will be with us wherever we go, in the ancient city full of traditions of past time, in the newly-cleared farm in America or the colonies, where no man has dwelt for traditions to gather round him; in the quiet countryside as in the busy town, no place shall be without it. You will have it with you in your sorrow as in your joy, in your work-a-day hours as in your leisure. It shall be no respecter of persons, but be shared by gentle and simple, learned & unlearned, & be as a language that all can understand. It will not hinder any work that is necessary to the life of man at the best, but it will destroy all degrading toil, all enervating luxury, all foppish frivolity. It will be the deadly foe of ignorance, dishonesty, and tyranny, and will foster good-will, fair dealing, and confidence between man & man. It will teach you to respect the highest intellect with a manly reverence, but



not to despise any man who does not pretend to be what he is not; and that which will be the instrument that it shall work with & the food that shall nourish it shall be man's pleasure in his daily labour, the kindest and best gift that the world has ever had.

Again I say, I am sure that this is what art means, no less; that if we attempt to keep art alive on other terms, we are but bolstering up a sham, and that it would be far better for us to accept the other alternative, the frank rejection of art, as many people, & they not the worst of us, have already done.

To these and not to me you must go if you want to have any clear idea of what is hoped for the future of the world when art is laid within her tomb. Yet I think I can in a measure judge from the present tendency of matters what is likely to happen to those things which we handicraftsmen have to deal with.

When men have given up the idea that the work of men's hands can ever be pleasurable to them, they must, as good men and true, do their utmost to reduce the work of the world to a minimum; like us artists they must do all they can to simplify the life of man, to reduce his wants as much as possible; & doubtless in theory they will be able to reduce them more than we shall, for it is clear that the waste of tissue caused by a search after beauty will be forbidden: all ornament will cease from the work of men's hands, though still, wher-

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Lecture II. Art and the Beauty of the Earth. ever nature works there will be beauty. The garment shall be unadorned, though the moth that frets it is painted with silver and pearl. London shall be a desert of hideousness, though the blossom of the "London pride" be more daintily flecked than the minutest missal that ever monk painted. And when all is done there will yet be too much work, that is to say, too much pain in the world.

What then? Machines then. Truly we shall have a good stock to start with, but not near enough. Some men must press on to martyrdom, and toil to invent new ones, till at last pretty nearly everything that is necessary to men will be made by machines. I don't see why it should not be done. I myself have boundless faith in their capacity. I believe machines can do everything, except make works of art.

And yet again, what next? Supposing we shall be able to get martyrs enough (or say slaves) to make all the machines that will still be needed, & to work them, shall we still be able to get rid of all labour, of all that which we have found out is an unmitigated curse? And what will our consciences be like (since I started by supposing us all to be conscientious people), when we think we have done all that we can do, and must still be waited upon by groaning, discontented wretches? What shall we do, I say?

Well, I must say that my imagination will stretch

no further than to suggest rebellion in general as a remedy, the end of which rebellion, if successful, must needs be to set up some form of art again as a necessary solace of mankind.

But to say the truth, this leads me to making another suggestion, a practical one I consider it. Suppose we start by rebelling at once; because when I spoke of the world having to choose between accepting and rejecting art, I did not suppose that its choice could be final if it chose to reject it. No, the rebellion will have to come and will be victorious, don't doubt that; only if we wait till the tyranny is firmly established our rebellion will have to be a Nihilistic one; every help would be gone save deadly anger and the hope that comes of despair; whereas if we begin now, the change and the counter-change will work together, and the new art will come upon us gradually, and we shall one day see it marching on steadily and victoriously, though its battle has raised no clamour, we, or our sons, or our sons' sons.

How shall our rebellion begin then? What is the remedy for the lack of due pleasure in their work which has befallen all craftsmen, and for the consequent sickness of art and degradation of civilization?

I am afraid whatever answer I may make to that question will disappoint you. I myself suffer so sorely from the lack above-mentioned that I have little remedy in myself save that of fostering dis-

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content. I have no infallible nostrum to cure an evil whose growth is centuries old. Any remedies I can think of are commonplace enough. In those old days of popular art, the world, in spite of all the ills that beset life, was struggling toward civilization & liberty, & it is in that way which we must also struggle, unless you think that we are civilized enough already, as I must confess I do not. Education on all sides is what we must look to. We may expect, if we do not learn much, to learn this at least, that we know but little, & that knowledge means aspiration or discontent, call it which you will.

I do not doubt that, as far as our schools of art go, education is bringing us to that point. I do not think any reasonable man can consider them a failure when the condition of the ornamental part of the individual arts is considered at the time of their foundation. True it is that those who established them were partly influenced by a delusive expectation that they would presently be able to supply directly a demand which was felt for trained & skilful designers of goods; but, though this hope failed them, they have no doubt influenced both that side of art & others also; among all that they have done not the least is that public recognition of the value of art in general which their very existence implies: or, to speak more correctly, their existence and the interest that is felt in them, is a token of people's uneasiness at the present disorganized state of the arts.

Perhaps you who study here, & represent such a large body of people who must needs have some aspirations towards the progress of the arts, will excuse a word or two from me a little less general than the rest I have been saying. I think I have a right to look upon you as enrolled soldiers of that rebellion against blank ugliness that I have been preaching this evening. You, therefore, above all people are bound to be careful not to give cause to the enemy to blaspheme. You are bound to be specially careful to do solid, genuine work, & eschew all pretence and flashiness.

Be careful to eschew all vagueness. It is better to be caught out in going wrong when you have had a definite purpose, than to shuffle and slur so that people can't blame you because they don't know what you are at. Hold fast to distinct form in art. Don't think too much of style, but set yourself to get out of you what you think beautiful, & express it, as cautiously as you please, but, I repeat, quite distinctly and without vagueness. Always think your design out in your head before you begin to get it on the paper. Don't begin by slobbering & messing about in the hope that something may come out of it. You must see it before you can draw it, whether the design be of your own invention or nature's. Remember always, form before colour, & outline, silhouette, before modelling; not because these latter are of less importance, but because they can't be right if the first are wrong.

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Lecture II. Now, upon all these points you may be as severe  
Art and the with yourselves as you will, and are not likely to  
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Furthermore, those of you especially who are designing for goods, try to get the most out of your material, but always in such a way as honours it most. Not only should it be obvious what your material is, but something should be done with it which is specially natural to it, something that could not be done with any other. This is the very *raison d'être* of decorative art: to make stone look like ironwork, or wood like silk, or pottery like stone is the last resource of the decrepitude of art. Set yourselves as much as possible against all machine work (this to all men). But if you have to design for machine work, at least let your design show clearly what it is. Make it mechanical with a vengeance, at the same time as simple as possible. Don't try, for instance, to make a printed plate look like a hand-painted one: make it something which no one would try to do if he were painting by hand, if your market drives you into printed plates: I don't see the use of them myself. To sum up, don't let yourselves be made machines, or it is all up with you as artists. Though I don't much love the iron and brass machines, the flesh & blood ones are more terrible & hopeless to me; no man is so clumsy or base a workman that he is not fit for something better than that.



Well, I have said that education is the first remedy for the barbarism which has been bred by the hurry of civilization and competitive commerce. To know that men lived & worked mightily before you is an incentive for you to work faithfully now, that you may leave something to those who come after you.

What next is to be thought of after education? I must here admit that if you accept art and join the ranks of those who are to rise in rebellion against the Philistines, you will have a roughish time of it. "Nothing for nothing and not much for a dollar," says a Yankee somewhere, and I am sorry to say it is the rule of nature also. Those of us who have money will have to give of it to the cause, & all of us will have to give time, and thought, and trouble to it; and I must now consider a matter of the utmost importance to art and to the lives of all of us, which we can, if we please, deal with at once, but which emphatically claims of us time, thought, and money. Of all the things that is likely to give us back popular art in England, the cleaning of England is the first and the most necessary. Those who are to make beautiful things must live in a beautiful place. Some people may be inclined to say, and I have heard the argument put forward, that the very opposition between the serenity & purity of art and the turmoil & squalor of a great modern city stimulates the invention of artists, and produces special life in the art of to-

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day. I cannot believe it. It seems to me that at the best it but stimulates the feverish & dreamy qualities that throw some artists out of the general sympathy. But apart from that, these are men who are stuffed with memories of more romantic days and pleasanter lands, and it is on these memories they live, to my mind not altogether happily for their art; and you see it is only a very few men who could have even these doubtful advantages.

I abide by my statement that those who are to make beautiful things must live in beautiful places, but you must understand I do not mean to claim for all craftsmen a share of those gardens of the world, or of those sublime & awe-inspiring mountains and wastes that men make pilgrimages to see; that is to say, not a personal share. Most of us must be content with the tales of the poets and painters about these places, and learn to love the narrow spot that surrounds our daily life for what of beauty and sympathy there is in it.

For surely there is no square mile of earth's inhabitable surface that is not beautiful in its own way, if we men will only abstain from wilfully destroying that beauty; and it is this reasonable share in the beauty of the earth that I claim as the right of every man who will earn it by due labour; a decent house with decent surroundings for every honest and industrious family; that is the claim which I make of you in the name of art. Is it such an exorbitant claim to make of civilization? of a

civilization that is too apt to boast in after-dinner  
speeches; too apt to thrust her blessings on far-  
off peoples at the cannon's mouth before she  
has improved the quality of those blessings so far  
that they are worth having at any price, even the  
smallest.

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Well, I am afraid that claim is exorbitant. Both  
you as representatives of the manufacturing dis-  
tricts, and I as representing the metropolis, seem  
hitherto to have assumed that, at any rate; nor is  
there one family in a thousand that has established  
its claim to the right aforesaid. It is a pity though;  
for if the claim is to be considered inadmissible,  
then is it most certain that we have been simply  
filling windbags and weaving sand-ropes by all  
the trouble we have taken in founding schools of  
art, National Galleries, South Kensington Mu-  
seums, and all the rest of it.

I have said education is good, is necessary, to all  
people; neither can you if you would withhold it;  
and yet to educate people with no hope, what do  
you expect to come of that? Perhaps you might  
learn what to expect in Russia.

Look you, as I sit at my work at home, which is  
at Hammersmith, close to the river, I often hear  
go past the window some of that ruffianism of  
which a good deal has been said in the papers of  
late, and has been said before at recurring periods.  
As I hear the yells and shrieks & all the degrada-  
tion cast on the glorious tongue of Shakespeare &



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Milton, as I see the brutal reckless faces & figures go past me, it rouses the recklessness & brutality in me also, & fierce wrath takes possession of me, till I remember, as I hope I mostly do, that it was my good luck only of being born respectable and rich that has put me on this side of the window among delightful books and lovely works of art, & not on the other side, in the empty street, the drink-steeped liquor-shops, the foul and degraded lodgings. What words can say what all that means? Do not think, I beg of you, that I am speaking rhetorically in saying that when I think of all this, I feel that the one great thing I desire is that this great country should shake off from her all foreign and colonial entanglements, & turn that mighty force of her respectable people, the greatest power the world has ever seen, to giving the children of these poor folk the pleasures & the hopes of men. Is that really impossible? is there no hope of it? If so, I can only say that civilization is a delusion and a lie; there is no such thing and no hope of such a thing.

But since I wish to live, & even to be happy, I cannot believe it impossible. I know by my own feelings & desires what these men want, what would have saved them from this lowest depth of savagery: employment which would foster their self-respect and win the praise and sympathy of their fellows, and dwellings which they could come to with pleasure, surroundings which would soothe

and elevate them; reasonable labour, reasonable rest. There is only one thing that can give them this, and that is art.

I have no doubt that you think this statement a ridiculous exaggeration, but it is my firm conviction nevertheless, & I can only ask you to remember that in my mind it means the properly organized labour of all men who make anything; that must at least be a mighty instrument in the raising of men's self-respect, in the adding of dignity to their lives. Once more, "Nothing for nothing and very little for a dollar." You can no more have art without paying for it than you can have anything else, & if you care about art, as you must when you come to know it, you will not shrink from the necessary sacrifice. After all, we are the descendants and countrymen of those who have well known how to give the lesser for the greater. What you have to sacrifice is chiefly money, that is, force, and dirt; a serious sacrifice I know; but perhaps, as I have said, we have made greater in England aforetime; nay, I am far from sure that dirt will not in the long run cost us more in hard cash even than art will.

So which shall we have, art or dirt?

What is to be done, then, if we make the better choice? The land we live in is not very big either in actual acreage or in scale of fashion, but I think it is not our natural love for it only that makes us think it as fit as any land for the peaceful dwellings

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Lecture II. of serious men. Our fathers have shown us that, Art and the if it could otherwise be doubted. I say, without fear Beauty of of contradiction, that no dwelling of men has ever the Earth. been sweeter or pleasanter than an ancient English house; but our fathers treated our lovely land well, and we have treated it ill. Time was when it was beautiful from end to end, and now you have to pick your way carefully to avoid coming across blotches of hideousness which are a disgrace, I will not say to civilization, but to human nature. I have seen no statistics of the size of these blotches in relation to the unspoiled, or partially spoiled, country, but in some places they run together so as to cover a whole county, or even several counties, while they increase at a fearful rate, fearful in good earnest and literally. Now, while this goes on unchecked, nay, unlamented, it is really idle to talk about art. While we are doing this or letting it be done, we are really covertly rejecting art, and it would be honester and better for us if we did so openly. If we accept art we must atone for what we have done and pay the cost of it. We must turn this land from the grimy back yard of a workshop into a garden. If that seems difficult, or rather impossible, to some of you, I cannot help it; I only know that it is necessary.

As to its being impossible, I do not believe it. The men of this generation even have accomplished matters that but a very little while ago would have been thought impossible. They conquered their



difficulties because their faces were set in that direction; & what was done once can be done again. Why even the money and the science that we expend in devices for killing and maiming our enemies present and future would make a good nest-egg towards the promotion of decency of life if we could make up our minds to that tremendous sacrifice.

However, I am far from saying that mere money can do much or indeed anything: it is our will that must do it. Nor need I attempt to try to show how that will should express itself in action. True I have, in common with some others, ideas as to what steps would best help us on our way, but those ideas would not be accepted by you, & I feel sure that when you are thoroughly intent on the goal you will find the means to reach it, & it is of infinitesimal importance what those means may be. When you have accepted the maxim that the external aspect of the country belongs to the whole public, & that whoever wilfully injures that property is a public enemy, the cause will be on its way to victory.

Meantime it is encouraging to me to think there is one thing that makes it possible for me to stand here, in a district that makes as much smoke as pottery, and to say what I have been saying on the subject of dirt, and that is that quite lately there has been visible expression given to a feeling on this subject, which has doubtless been long grow-

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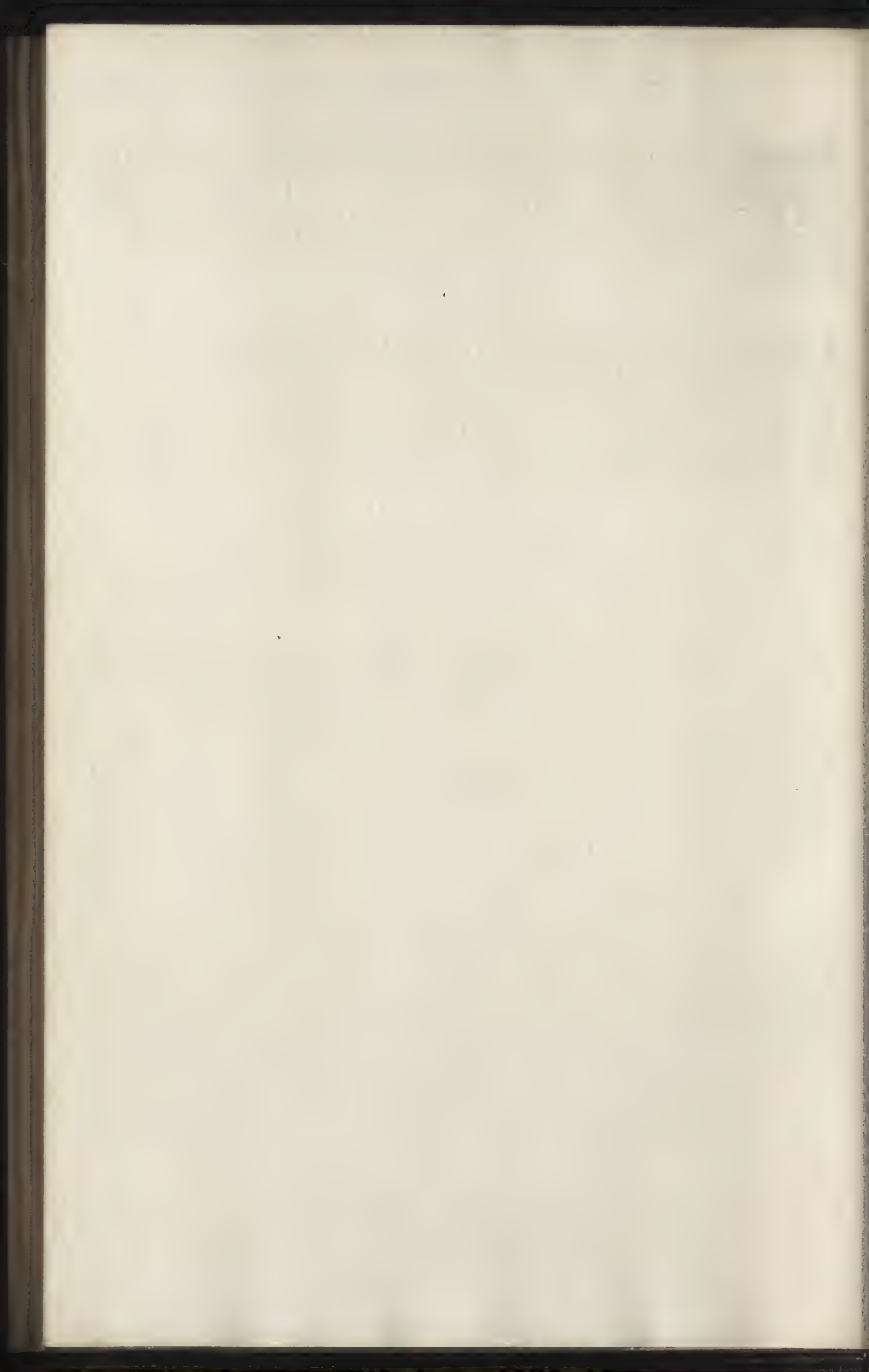
ing. If I am a crazy dreamer, as may well be, yet there are many members and supporters of such societies as the Kyrle and the Commons Preservation Societies, who have not time to dream, and whose craziness, if that befel them, would be speedily felt throughout the country.

I pray your pardon for having tried your patience so long. A very few words more, and I have done. Those words are words of hope. Indeed, if I have said anything that seemed to you hopeless, it has been, I think, owing to that bitterness which will sometimes overtake an impatient man when he feels how little his own hands can do towards helping the cause that he has at heart. I know that cause will conquer in the end, for it is an article of faith with me, that the world cannot drop back into savagery, & that art must be its fellow on the forward march. I know well it is not for me to prescribe the road which that progress must take. I know that many things that seem to me to-day clinging hindrances, nay, poisons to that progress, may be furtherers of it, medicines to it, though they be fated to bring terrible things to pass before the visible good comes of them. But that very faith impels me to speak according to my knowledge, feeble as it may be and rash as the words may sound; for every man who has a cause at heart is bound to act as if it depended on him alone, however well he may know his own unworthiness; & thus is action brought to birth from mere opinion.

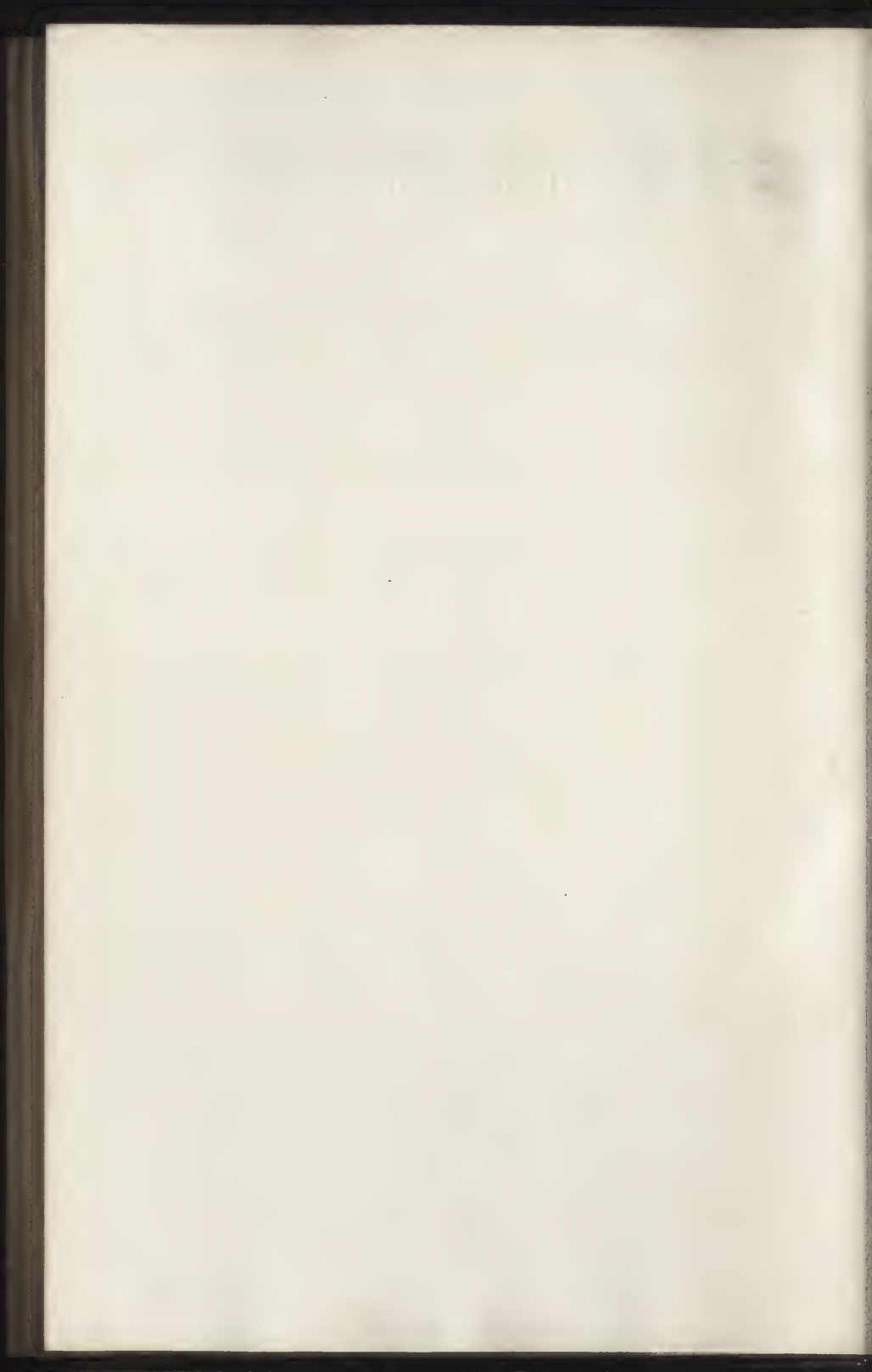
And in all I have been saying I have had steadily Lecture II.  
in mind that you have asked me to speak to you Art and the  
as a friend, & that I could do no less than be quite Beauty of  
open and fearless before my friends and fellow- the Earth.  
craftsmen.

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SOME HINTS ON PATTERN-DE-  
SIGNING. BY WILLIAM MORRIS.





SOME HINTS ON PATTERN-DESIGNING. A LECTURE DELIVERED BY WILLIAM MORRIS AT THE WORKING MEN'S COLLEGE, LONDON, ON DECEMBER 10, 1881.

By the word pattern-design, of which I have undertaken to speak to you to-night, I mean the ornamentation of a surface by work that is not imitative or historical, at any rate, not principally or essentially so. Such work is often not literally flat, for it may be carving or moulded work in plaster or pottery; but whatever material relief it may have is given to it for the sake of beauty & richness, and not for the sake of imitation, or to tell a fact directly; so that people have called this art ornamental art, though indeed all real art is ornamental.

Now, before we go further, we may as well ask ourselves what reason or right this so-called ornamental art has to existence? We might answer the question shortly by saying that it seems clear that mankind has hitherto determined to have it even at the cost of a good deal of labour & trouble: an answer good enough to satisfy our consciences that we are not necessarily wasting our time in meeting here to consider it; but we may furthermore try to get at the reasons that have forced men in the mass always to expect to have what to some of them doubtless seems an absurd superfluity of life.

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I do not know a better way of getting at these reasons than for each of us to suppose himself to be in the room in which he will have to pass a good part of his life, the said room being quite bare of ornament, & to be there that he may consider what he can do to make the bare walls pleasant & helpful to him; I say the walls, because, after all, the widest use of pattern-designing is the clothing of the walls of a room, hall, church, or what building you will. Doubtless there will be some, in these days at least, who will say, "'Tis most helpful to me to let the bare walls alone." So also there would be some who, when asked with what manner of books they will furnish their room, would answer, "With none." But I think you will agree with me in thinking that both these sets of people would be in an unhealthy state of mind, and probably of body also; in which case we need not trouble ourselves about their whims, since it is with healthy & sane people only that art has dealings.

Again, a healthy & sane person being asked with what kind of art he would clothe his walls, might well answer, "With the best art," and so end the question. Yet, out on it! so complex is human life, that even this seemingly most reasonable answer may turn out to be little better than an evasion.

For I suppose the best art to be the pictured representation of men's imaginings; what they have thought has happened to the world before their time, or what they deem they have seen with the

eyes of the body or the soul: and the imaginings thus represented are always beautiful indeed, but oftenest stirring to men's passions & aspirations, and not seldom sorrowful or even terrible.

Stories that tell of men's aspirations for more than material life can give them, their struggles for the future welfare of their race, their unselfish love, their unrequited service: things like this are the subjects for the best art; in such subjects there is hope surely, yet the aspect of them is likely to be sorrowful enough: defeat the seed of victory, and death, the seed of life, will be shown on the face of most of them.

Take note, too, that in the best art all these solemn and awful things are expressed clearly and without any vagueness, with such life and power that they impress the beholder so deeply that he is brought face to face with the very scenes, & lives among them for a time; so raising his life above the daily tangle of small things that wearies him, to the level of the heroism which they represent.

This is the best art; and who can deny that it is good for us all that it should be at hand to stir our emotions: yet its very greatness makes it a thing to be handled carefully, for we cannot always be having our emotions deeply stirred: that wearies us body and soul; and man, an animal that longs for rest like other animals, defends himself against the weariness by hardening his heart, & refusing to be moved every hour of the day by tragic emo-

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tions; nay, even by beauty that claims his attention over much.

Such callousness is bad, both for the arts and our own selves; and therefore it is not so good to have the best art for ever under our eyes, though it is abundantly good that we should be able to get at it from time to time.

Meantime, I cannot allow that it is good for any hour of the day to be wholly stripped of life and beauty; therefore we must provide ourselves with lesser (I will not say worse) art with which to surround our common workaday or restful times; & for those times, I think, it will be enough for us to clothe our daily & domestic walls with ornament that reminds us of the outward face of the earth, of the innocent love of animals, or of man passing his days between work and rest as he does. I say, with ornament that reminds us of these things, and sets our minds and memories at work easily creating them; because scientific representation of them would again involve us in the problems of hard fact and the troubles of life, and so once more destroy our rest for us.

If this lesser art will really be enough to content us, it is a good thing; for as to the higher art there never can be very much of it going on, since but few people can be found to do it; also few can find money enough to possess themselves of any portion of it, and, if they could, it would be a piece of preposterous selfishness to shut it up from other

people's eyes; while of the secondary art there ought to be abundance for all men, so much that you need but call in the neighbours, & not all the world, to see your pretty new wall when it is finished.

But this kind of art must be suggestive rather than imitative; because, in order to have plenty of it, it must be a kind of work that is not too difficult for ordinary men with imaginations capable of development; men from whom you cannot expect miracles of skill, and from whose hands you must not ask too much, lest you lose what their intelligence has to give you, by over-wearying them.

Withal, the representation of this lower kind of life is pretty sure to become soulless and tiresome unless it have a soul given to it by the efforts of men forced by the limits of order and the necessities of art to think of these things for themselves, and so to give you some part of the infinite variety which abides in the mind of man.

Of course you understand that it is impossible to imitate nature literally; the utmost realism of the most realistic painter falls a long way short of that; and as to the work which must be done by ordinary men, not unskilled or dull to beauty; the attempt to attain to realism would be sure to result in obscuring their intelligence, & in starving you of all the beauty which you desire in your hearts, but which you have not learned to express by means of art.

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Let us go back to our wall again, and think of it. If you are to put nothing on it but what strives to be a literal imitation of nature, all you can do is to have a few cut flowers or bits of boughs nailed to it, with perhaps a blue-bottle fly or a butterfly here and there. Well, I don't deny that this may make good decoration now and then, but if all decoration had to take that form I think weariness of it would drive you to a white-washed wall; and at the best it is a very limited view to take of nature.

Is it not better to be reminded, however simply, of the close vine-trellis that keeps out the sun by the Nile side; or of the wild woods & their streams, with the dogs panting beside them; or of the swallows sweeping above the garden boughs toward the house-eaves where their nestlings are, while the sun breaks the clouds on them; or of the many-flowered summer meadows of Picardy? Is not all this better than having to count day after day a few sham-real boughs and flowers, casting sham-real shadows on your walls, with little hint of anything beyond Covent Garden in them?

You may be sure that any decoration is futile, and has fallen into at least the first stage of degradation, when it does not remind you of something beyond itself, of something of which it is but a visible symbol.

Now, to sum up, what we want to clothe our walls with is (1) something that it is possible for us to get; (2) something that is beautiful; (3) something



which will not drive us either into unrest or into  
callousness; (4) something which reminds us of  
life beyond itself, and which has the impress of  
human imagination strong on it; and (5) some-  
thing which can be done by a great many people  
without too much difficulty and with pleasure.

These conditions I believe to have been fulfilled  
by the pattern-designers in all times when art has  
been healthy, and to have been all more or less  
violated when art has been unhealthy and unreal.  
In such evil times beauty has given place to whim,  
imagination to extravagance, nature to sick night-  
mare fancies, and finally workmanlike consider-  
ate skill, which refuses to allow either the brain or  
the hand to be over-taxed, which, without spar-  
ing labour when necessary, refuses sternly to waste  
it, has given place to commercial trickery sus-  
tained by laborious botching.

Now, I have been speaking of what may be called  
the moral qualities of the art we are thinking of;  
let us try, therefore, to shorten their names, and  
have one last word on them before we deal with  
the material or technical part.

Ornamental pattern-work, to be raised above the  
contempt of reasonable men, must possess three  
qualities: beauty, imagination, and order.

'Tis clear I need not waste many words on the first  
of these. You will be drawing water with a sieve  
with a vengeance if you cannot manage to make  
ornamental work beautiful.

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As for the second quality, imagination: the necessity for that may not be so clear to you, considering the humble nature of our art; yet you will probably admit, when you come to think of it, that every work of man which has beauty in it must have some meaning in it also; that the presence of any beauty in a piece of handicraft implies that the mind of the man who made it was more or less excited at the time, was lifted somewhat above the commonplace; that he had something to communicate to his fellows which they did not know or feel before, and which they would never have known or felt if he had not been there to force them to it.

I want you to think of this when you see, as, unfortunately, you are only too likely often to see, some lifeless imitation of a piece of bygone art, & are puzzled to know why it does not satisfy you. The reason is that the imitator has not entered into the soul of the dead artist; nay, has supposed that he had but a hand and no soul, and so has not known what he meant to do. I dwell on this, because it forces on us the conclusion that if we cannot have an ornamental art of our own, we cannot have one at all. Every real work of art, even the humblest, is inimitable. I am most sure that all the heaped-up knowledge of modern science, all the energy of modern commerce, all the depth & spirituality of modern thought, cannot reproduce so much as the handiwork of an ignorant, super-

stitious Berkshire peasant of the fourteenth century; nay, of a wandering Kurdish shepherd, or of a skin-and-bone oppressed Indian ryot. This, I say, I am sure of; and to me the certainty is not depressing, but inspiring, for it bids us remember that the world has been noteworthy for more than one century and one place, a fact which we are pretty much apt to forget.

Now as to the third of the essential qualities of our art: order. I have to say of it, that without it neither the beauty nor the imagination could be made visible; it is the bond of their life, and as good as creates them, if they are to be of any use to people in general. Let us see, therefore, with what instruments it works, how it brings together the material and spiritual sides of the craft.

I have already said something of the way in which it deals with the materials which nature gives it, & how, as it were, it both builds a wall against vagueness and opens a door therein for imagination to come in by. Now, this is done by means of treatment which is called, as one may say technically, the conventionalizing of nature. That is to say, order invents certain beautiful and natural forms, which, appealing to a reasonable & imaginative person, will remind him not only of the part of nature which, to his mind at least, they represent, but also of much that lies beyond that part. I have already hinted at some reasons for this treatment of natural objects. You can't bring a whole country-

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side, or a whole field, into your room, nor even a whole bush; and, moreover, only a very specially skilled craftsman can make any approach to what might pass with us in moments of excitement for an imitation of such-like things. These are limitations which are common to every form of the lesser arts; but, besides these, every material in which household goods are fashioned imposes certain special limitations within which the craftsman must work. Here again, is the wall of order against vagueness, and the door of order for imagination. For you must understand from the first that these limitations are as far as possible from being hindrances to beauty in the several crafts. On the contrary, they are incitements and helps to its attainment; those who find them irksome are not born craftsmen, and the periods of art that try to get rid of them are declining periods.

Now this must be clear to you, if you come to think of it. Give an artist a piece of paper, & say to him, "I want a design," and he must ask you, "What for? What's to be done with it?" And if you can't tell him, well, I dare not venture to mention the name which his irritation will give you. But if you say, I want this queer space filled with ornament, I want you to make such and such a pretty thing out of these intractable materials, straightway his invention will be quickened, and he will set to work with a will; for, indeed, delight in skill lies at the root of all art.

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Now, further, this working in materials, which is the *raison d'être* of all pattern-work, still further limits it in the direct imitation of nature, drives it still more decidedly to appeal to the imagination. For example: you have a heap of little coloured cubes of glass to make your picture of, or you have some coloured thrums of worsted wherewith to build up at once a picture and a piece of cloth; well, there is a wrong & a right way of setting to work about this: if you please you may set to work with your cubes and your thrums to imitate a brush-painted picture, a work of art done in a material wherein the limitations are as few and pliable as they are many and rigid in the one you are working in; with almost invisible squares or shuttle-strokes, you may build up, square by square, or line by line, an imitation of an oil-painter's rapid stroke of the brush, and so at last produce your imitation, which doubtless people will wonder at, & say, "How was it done? we can see neither cubes nor thrums in it." And so also would they have wondered if you had made a portrait of the Lord Mayor in burnt sugar, or of Mr. Parnell in fireworks. But the wonder being over, 'tis like that some reasonable person will say, "This is not specially beautiful; & as to its skill, after all, you have taken a year to do what a second-rate painter could have done in three days. Why have you done it at all?" An unanswerable question, I fear.

Well, such materials may be used thus, so clever

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are men; nay, they have been used thus, so perverse and dull are men!

On the other hand, if you will, you may thoroughly consider your glass cubes or your worsted thrums, and think what can best be done with them; but they need not fetter your imagination, for you may, with them, tell a story in a new way, even if it be not a new story; you may conquer the obstinacy of your material and make it obey you as far as the needs of beauty go, and the telling of your tale; you will be pleased with the victory of your skill, but you will not have forgotten your subject amidst mere laboriousness, and you will know that your victory has been no barren one, but has produced a beautiful thing, which nothing but your struggle with difficulties could have brought forth, & when people look at it they will be forced to say: "Well, though it is rough, yet, in spite of the material, the workman has shown that he knows what a good line is; it is beautiful, certainly, after its fashion, and the workman has looked at things with his own eyes: and then how the tesserae gleam in this indestructible picture, how the gold glitters!" Or, "What wealth of colour and softness of gradation there is in these interwoven thrums of worsted, that have drunk the dye so deeply. No other material conceivable could have done it just like this. And the wages are not so high; we can have plenty of this sort of work. Yes, the man is worth his keep."



In this way, also, your materials can be used, so simple and trustful may men be that they may venture to make a work of art thus: nay, so helpful and joyous have they been, that they have so ventured, for the pleasure of many people, their own not least of all.

Now, I have tried to point out to you that the nature of the craft of pattern-designing imposes certain limitations within which it has to work, and also that each branch of it has further limitations of its own. Before saying a few words that relate to these special limitations, I will, by your leave, narrow our subject by dwelling a little on what is one of the most important parts of pattern-designing: the making of a recurring pattern for a flat surface. Let us first look a little on the construction of these, at the lines on which they are built. Now, the beauty and imagination which I have spoken of as necessary to all patterns may be, and often have been, of the very simplest kind, & their order the most obvious. So, to begin with, let us take one of these: our wall may be ornamented with mere horizontal stripes of colour; what beauty there may be in these will be limited to the beauty of very simple proportion, and in the tints and contrast of tints used, while the meaning of them will be confined to the calling people's attention to the charm of material, and due orderly construction of a wall.

After this simplest form comes that of chequers

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and squares of unfoliated diaper, so to call it, which still is but a hint at the possible construction of the wall, when it is not in itself constructional. From that we get to diapers made by lines, either rectilinear or taking the form of circles touching one another. We have now left the idea of constructional blocks or curves, and are probably suggesting scoring of lines on the surface of the wall joined to inlaying, perhaps; or else there is an idea in it of some sort of hanging; at first, as in much of the ancient Egyptian work, woven of reeds or grass, but later on suggesting weaving of finer materials that do not call attention to the crossing of warp and weft.

This next becomes a floriated diaper. The lines are formed by shapes of stems, & leaves or flowers fill the spaces between the lines. This kind of ornamentation has got a long way from the original stripes and squares, and even from the cross-barred matting diapers. The first of these (when used quite simply) is commonly external work, and is used to enrich further what sunlight and shadow already enrich. The second either implies an early stage of civilization, or a persistent memory of its rudeness.

But as to this more elaborate diaper, simple as its construction is, it has never been superseded: in its richer forms it is intimately connected with the stately and vast shapes of Roman architecture; and until the great change took place, when the

once-despised East began to mingle with the old  
decaying Western civilization, and even to dominate it, it was really the only form taken by recurring patterns, except mere chequer and scalework, though certain complications of the circle and the square were used to gain greater richness.

Now the next change, so far as mere construction goes, takes us into what is practically the last stage that recurring patterns can get to, and the change is greater than at first sight it may seem to you: it is part of that change in the master-art from late and decaying Classical into Byzantine, or, as I would rather call it, new-born Gothic art. The first places where it is seen are a few buildings of the early part of the sixth century, when architecture seems to have taken a sudden leap, &, in fact, to have passed from death to new birth. As to the construction of patterns the change was simply this: continuous growth of curved lines took the place of mere contiguity, or of the interlacement of straight lines.

All the recurring patterns of the ancient & classical world were, I repeat, founded on the diaper, square or round. All their borders or friezes were formed either by tufts of flowers growing side by side, with their tendrils sometimes touching or interlacing, or by scrolls wherein there was no continuous growth, but only a masking of the repeat by some spreading member of the pattern. But when young Gothic took the place of old Classic, the change

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was marked in pattern-designing by the universal acceptance of continuous growth as a necessity of borders and friezes; and in square pattern-work, as I should call it, this growth was the general rule in all the more important designs.

Of this square continuous pattern-work there are two principal forms of construction: (1) The branch formed on a diagonal line, and (2) the net framed on variously proportioned diamonds. These main constructions were, as time went on, varied in all sorts of ways, more or less beautiful and ingenious; and they are of course only bounding or leading lines, and are to be filled up in all sorts of ways. Nay, sometimes these leading lines are not drawn, and we have left us a sort of powdering in the devices which fill up the spaces between the imaginary lines. Our Sicilian pattern of the thirteenth century gives us an example of this; and this Italian one of the fourteenth century gives us another, the leading lines of the diagonal branch being broken, & so leaving a powdering on those lines; but in all cases the net or branch lines, that is, the simple diagonal or crossing diagonal, are really there.

For clearness' sake, I will run through the different kinds of construction that I have named: (1) Horizontal stripes; (2) block diaper or chequer; (3) matting diaper, very various in form; (4) square line diaper; (5) floriated square diaper; (6) round diaper formed by contiguous circles; (7) the

diagonal branch; (8) the net; (9, which is supplementary) powderings on the lines of the diagonal branch, or of the net.

These are all the elementary forms of construction for a recurring pattern, but of course there may be many varieties of each of them. Elaborate patterns may be wrought on the stripes or chequers; the foliated diaper may be wrought interlocking; the net may be complicated by net within net; the diagonal bough may be crossed variously, or the alternate boughs may be slipped down so as to form a kind of untied and dislocated net; the circles may intersect each other instead of touching, or polygonal figures may be built on them, as in the strange star patterns which are the differentia of Arab art.

Of course, also, these constructional lines may be masked in an infinite number of ways, & in certain periods it was most usual to do this, & much ingenuity was spent, and not a little wasted, in doing it.

Before I pass to the use to which these forms of pattern may be put, I will say a little on the subject of the relief of patterns, which may be considered as the other side of their mechanism. We have, you see, been talking about the skeletons of them, and those skeletons must be clothed with flesh, that is, their members must have tangible superficial area; & by the word relief I understand the method of bringing this out.

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Of course this part of the subject is intimately connected with the colour of designs, but of that I shall only say so much as is necessary for dealing with their relief.

To put the matter as shortly as possible, one may say that there are two ways of relief for a recurring surface pattern, either that the figure shall show light upon a dark, or dark upon a light ground; or that the whole pattern, member by member, should be outlined by a line of colour which both serves to relieve it from its ground, which is not necessarily either lighter or darker than the figure, and also prevents the colour from being inharmonious or hard.

Now, to speak broadly, the first of these methods of relief is used by those who are chiefly thinking about form, the second by those whose minds are most set on colour; and you will easily see, if you come to think of it, how widely different the two methods are. Those who have been used to the first method of dark upon light, or light upon dark, often get confused and troubled when they have to deal with many colours, and wonder why it is that, in spite of all their attempts at refinement of colour, their designs still look wrong. The fact is, that when you have many colours, when you are making up your design by contrast of hues & variety of shades, you must use the bounding line to some extent, if not through and through.

Of these two methods of relief, you must think of



the first as being the relief of one plane from another; in it there is always an idea of at least more than one plane of surface, & often of several planes. The second you must think of as the relief of colour from colour, and designs treated thus both should look, and do look, perfectly flat. Again, to speak broadly, the first method is that of the West, the second that of the East; but of the later & (excuse the "bull") the Gothic East. The idea of plane relieved on plane was always present in all the patterns of the ancient and classical world.

Now, as to the use to be made of these recurring surface patterns, the simpler of them, such as mere stripes & simple diapers, have been, & doubtless will always be, used for external decoration of walls, & also for subsidiary decoration where the scale is large & where historical art plays the chief part. On the other hand, some people may doubt as to what share, if any, the more elaborate forms of pattern work should have in internal wall decoration. True it is that the principle of the continuous line, which led up to all that elaboration, was an invention of the later East, just as the system of relieving colour from colour was; and I believe the two things are closely connected, and sprang from this cause, that these peoples were for various reasons not much driven towards the higher pictorial art, and did not reach any great excellence in it; therefore they felt a need for developing their pattern art to the highest degree possible, till it

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became something more than a little-noticed accompaniment to historical art, which was all that it used to be in the ancient or the classical world. Perhaps the fact that the barbarians invented what the elder civilization, the great nurse of the higher arts, despised, may seem to some of you a condemnation of this more elaborate pattern-work; but before you make up your minds to that, I would ask you to remember within what narrow limits that perfection of Greece moved. It seems to me that unless you can have the whole of that severe system of theirs, you will not be bettered by taking to a minor part of it; nor, indeed, do I think that you can have that system now, for it was the servant of a perfection which is no longer attainable. The whole art of the classical ancients, while it was alive and growing, was the art of a society made up of a narrow aristocracy of citizens, waited upon by a large body of slaves, and surrounded by a world of barbarism which was always despised & never noticed till it threatened to overwhelm the self-sufficient aristocracy that called itself the civilized world.

No, I think that the barbarians who invented modern Europe invented also several other things which we, their children, cannot decently disregard, or pass by wrapped up in a cloak of sham classical disguise; and that one of these things, the smallest of them if you will, was this invention of the continuous line that led to elaborate & in-

dependent pattern-work; and I believe that this was one of those things which, once invented, cannot be dropped, but must always remain a part of architecture, like the arch, like the pointed arch. Properly subordinated to architecture on the one hand, & to historic art on the other, it ought yet, I think, to play a great part in the making our houses at once beautiful and restful; an end which is one of the chief reasons for existence of all art.

As to its subordination to the greater arts, all we can say about that is that we should not have too much of it. I don't think there is any danger of its thrusting the more intellectual and historic arts out of their due place; rather, perhaps, it is like to be neglected in comparison with them. But if it makes any advance, as it may do, I can see that counsels of despair may sometimes drive us into excess in the use of surface ornament. I mean that our houses are so base and ugly, and it is so hard to alter this bad condition of life, that people may be driven out of all hope of getting good architecture, and try to forget their troubles in that respect by overdoing their internal decoration. Well, you must not suppose that I object to people making the best of their ugly houses; indeed, you probably know that I personally should be finely landed if they did not. Nevertheless, noble building is the first and best and least selfish of the arts, and unless we can manage to get it somehow, we shall soon have no decoration, or, indeed, art of any kind,

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to put into the dog-hutches which we now think good enough for refined and educated people, to say nothing about other buildings lesser and greater.

Now, with your leave, I will go through some of the chief crafts in which surface patterns (and chiefly recurring ones) are used, and try to note some of the limitations which necessity & reason impose on them, and show how those limitations may be made helps, and not hindrances, to those crafts.

Let us take first the humble, but, as things go, useful art of paper-staining. And firstly, you must remember that it is a cheap art, somewhat easily done; elaborate patterns are easy in it; so be careful not to overdo either the elaboration in your paper or the amount of pattern-work in your rooms. I mean, by all means have the prettiest paper you can get, but don't fall in love so much with the cheapness of its prettiness as to have several patterns in one room, or even two, if you will be advised by me. Above all, eschew that bastard imitation of picture, embroidery, or tapestry-work, which, under the name of dado-papers, are so common at present; even when they are well designed, as they often are, they are a mistake. They do not in the least fill the place of patterns of beautiful execution or of beautiful materials, and they weary us of these better things by simulating them. The ease with which the brushwork

of an artist can be, I will not say imitated, but caricatured, in paperhangings, is a snare to this useful manufacture, & has been so from the first. In the printed wares you may have any amount of fine lines & shading by hatching, but you cannot have any colour which has not a definite outline. By disregarding these facts, you lose whatever of special pleasure is to be obtained from linear shading, and by clear relief of light upon dark or dark upon light, and you affront people's reason by trying to get the subtle gradations which the execution of handwork alone can give.

Now, again, as to paperhangings, one may accept as an axiom that, other things being equal, the more mechanical the process, the less direct should be the imitation of natural forms; on the other hand, in these wares which are stretched out flat on the wall, and have no special beauty of execution about them, we may find ourselves driven to do more than we otherwise should in masking the construction of our patterns. It gives us a chance of showing that we are pattern-designers born by accepting this apparent dilemma cheerfully, and setting our wits to work to conquer it. Let me state the difficulty again. In this craft the absence of limitations as to number of colours, and the general ease of the manufacture, is apt to tempt us into a mere twisting of natural forms into lines that may pass for ornamental; to yield to this temptation will almost certainly result in our de-

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signing a mere platitude. On the other hand is the temptation to design a pattern as we might do for a piece of woven goods, where the structure is boldly shown, & the members strongly marked; but such a pattern done in a cheap material will be apt to look over-ambitious, and, being stretched out flat on the wall, will lead the eye overmuch to its geometrical lines, and all repose will be lost.

What we have to do to meet this difficulty is to create due paper-stainers' flowers & leaves, forms that are obviously fit for printing with a block; to mask the construction of our pattern enough to prevent people from counting the repeats of our pattern, while we manage to lull their curiosity to trace it out; to be careful to cover our ground equably. If we are successful in these two last things, we shall attain a look of satisfying mystery, which is an essential in all patterned goods, and which in paperhangings must be done by the designer, since, as aforesaid, they fall into no folds, and have no special beauty of material to attract the eye.

Furthermore, we must, if we possibly can, avoid making accidental lines, which are very apt to turn up when a pattern is repeated over a wall. As to such lines, vertical lines are the worst; diagonal ones are pretty bad, and horizontal ones do not so much matter.

As to the colouring of paperhangings, it is much on the same footing as the forms of the design.



The material being commonplace and the manufacture mechanical, the colour should above all things be modest; though there are plenty of pigments which might tempt us into making our colour very bright or even very rich, we shall do well to be specially cautious in their use, and not to attempt brightness unless we are working in a very light key of colour, & if our general tone is bound to be deep, to keep the colour grey. You understand, of course, that no colour should ever be muddy or dingy; to make goods of such sort shows inexperience, & to persist in making them, incapacity. Now, a last word about this craft. Have papers with pretty patterns if you like them, but if you don't, I beg of you, quite seriously, to have nothing to do with them, but whitewash your wall and be done with it. That, I distinctly inform you, is the way, and the only way, that you who do not care about the art can help us manufacturers.

So much for paper-staining. The craft of printing on cloth (generally cotton) we may take next as a kindred art. Yet we don't meet quite the same difficulties here, for it is generally used so that it falls into folds or turns round furniture; so we need not be so anxious about masking the structure of our patterns, or so afraid of accidental lines; & as to the colour, our material is so much more interesting that we may indulge in any brightness we can get out of genuine dyes, which for the rest have always some beauty of their own.

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As to the spirit of the designs for this craft, for some reason or other, I imagine because it is so decidedly an Eastern manufacture, it seems to call for specially fantastic forms. A pattern which would make a very good paperhanging would often look dull and uninteresting as a chintz pattern. The naivest of flowers with which you may do anything that is not ugly; birds and animals, no less naïve, all made up of spots and stripes and flecks of broken colour, these seem the sort of thing we ask for. You cannot well go wrong so long as you avoid commonplace, & keep somewhat on the daylight side of nightmare. Only you must remember that, considering the price of the material it is done on, this craft is a specially troublesome one; so that in designing for it you must take special care that every fresh process you lay upon a poor filmy piece of cotton, worth fourpence or fivepence per yard, should really add beauty to it, and not be done for whim's sake. I really think you would be shocked if you knew how much trouble and anxiety can be thrown away on such trifles: what a stupendous weight of energy & the highest science have been brought to bear upon producing a pattern consisting of three black dots & a pink line, done in some special manner on a piece of cotton cloth. I don't quite know what excuse for this trifling a philosopher might find, but to a craftsman like myself, it seems mere barbarous twaddle, and I beg of you who wish to avoid complicity with it never to buy

a piece of patterned cotton if you don't think the pattern pretty: that's the only way you can help us craftsmen in the matter; that is what I call patronage of art.

Now as to the pattern-designing for figured woven stuffs, which is one of the most important branches of the art. Here, as you will find yourself more limited by special material than in the branches above named, so you will not be so much beset by the dangers of commonplace. You cannot choose but make your flowers weavers' flowers. On the other hand, as the craft is a nobler one than paper-staining or cotton-printing, it claims from us a higher and more dignified style of design. Your forms must be clearer and sharper, your drawing more exquisite, your pattern must have more of meaning and history in it: in a word, your design must be more concentrated than in what we have hitherto been considering; yet again, if you have to risk more, you have some compensation in the fact that you will not be hampered by any necessity for masking the construction of your pattern, both because your stuff is pretty sure to be used falling into folds, & will be wrought in some material that is beautiful in itself, more or less; so that there will be a play of light and shade on it, which will give subordinate incident, & minimize the risk of hardness. Moreover, these last facts about woven stuffs call on you to design in a bolder fashion and on a larger scale than for stiffer & duller surfaced goods;

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so we will say that the special qualities needful for a good design for woven stuff are breadth & boldness, ingenuity and closeness of invention, clear definite detail joined to intricacy of parts, & finally, a distinct appeal to the imagination by skilful suggestion of delightful pieces of nature.

In saying this about woven stuffs I have been thinking of goods woven by the shuttle in the common looms, which produce recurring patterns; there are, however, two forms of the weaver's craft which are outside these, and on which I will say a few words: first, the art of tapestry weaving, in which the subjects are so elaborate that, of necessity, it has thrown aside all mechanical aid, and is wrought by the most primitive process of weaving, its loom being a tool rather than a machine. Under these circumstances it would be somewhat of a waste of labour to weave recurring patterns in it, though in less mechanical times it has been done. I have said that you could scarcely bring a whole bush into a room for your wall decoration, but since in this case the mechanical imitations are so few, and the colour obtainable in its materials is so deep, rich, & varied, as to be unattainable by anything else than the hand of a good painter in a finished picture, you really may almost turn your wall into a rose hedge or a deep forest, for its material and general capabilities almost compel us to fashion plane above plane of rich, crisp, and varying foliage with bright blossoms, or strange

birds showing through the intervals. However, such designs as this must be looked upon as a sort of halting-place on the way to historical art, and may be so infinitely varied that we have not time to dwell upon it.

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The second of these offshoots of the weaver's craft is the craft of carpet-making; by which I mean the real art, and not the makeshift goods woven purely mechanically. Now this craft, despite its near kinship as to technical matters with tapestry, is very specially a pattern-designer's affair. As to designing for it, I must say it is mighty difficult, because from the nature of it we are bound to make our carpet not only a passable piece of colour, but even an exquisite one, and, at the same time, we must get enough of form and meaning into it to justify our making it at all in these Western parts of the world; since as to the mere colour we are not likely to beat, and may be well pleased if we equal, an ordinary genuine Eastern specimen.

Once more, the necessary limitations of the art will make us, not mar us, if we have courage and skill to face and overcome them. As for a carpet-design, it seems quite clear that it should be quite flat, that it should give no more at least than the merest hint of one plane behind another; & this, I take it, not so much for the obvious reason that we don't feel comfortable in walking over what simulates high relief, but rather because in a carpet we specially desire quality in material & colour:

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that is, every little bit of surface must have its own individual beauty of material and colour. Nothing must thrust this necessity out of view in a carpet. Now, if in our coarse, worsted mosaic we make awkward attempts at shading and softening tint into tint, we shall dirty our colour and so degrade our material; our mosaic will look coarse, as it ought never to look; we shall expose our lack of invention, and shall be parties to the making of an expensive piece of goods for no good reason. Now, the way to get the design flat, & at the same time to make it both refined and effective in colour, in a carpet design, is to follow the second kind of relief I told you of, and to surround all or most of your figure by a line of another tint, and to remember while you are doing it that it is done for this end, and not to make your design look neat and trim. If this is well done, your pieces of colour will look gemlike & beautiful in themselves, your flowers will be due carpet flowers, & the effect of the whole will be soft and pleasing. But I admit that you will probably have to go to the school of the Eastern designers to attain excellence in the art, as this in its perfection is a speciality of theirs. Now, after all, I am bound to say that when these difficulties are conquered, I, as a Western man & a picture-lover, must still insist on plenty of meaning in your patterns; I must have unmistakable suggestions of gardens & fields, & strange trees, boughs, and tendrils, or I can't do with your pat-



tern, but must take the first piece of nonsense-work a Kurdish shepherd has woven from tradition and memory; all the more, as even in that there will be some hint of past history.

Since carpets are always bordered cloths, this will be a good place for saying a little on the subject of borders, which will apply somewhat to other kinds of wares. You may take it that there are two kinds of border: one that is merely a finish to a cloth, to keep it from looking frayed out, as it were, and which doesn't attract much notice. Such a border will not vary much from the colour of the cloth it bounds, and will have in its construction many of the elements of the construction of the filling-pattern; though it must be strongly marked enough to fix that filling in its place, so to say.

The other kind of border is meant to draw the eye to it more or less, & is sometimes of more importance than the filling: so that it will be markedly different in colour, and as to pattern will rather help out that of the filling by opposing its lines than by running with them. Of these borders, the first, I think, is the fitter when you are using a broad border; the second does best for a narrow one.

All borders should be made up of several members, even where they are narrow, or they will look bald & poor, & ruin the whole cloth. This is very important to remember.

The turning the corner of a border is a difficult

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business, and will try your designing skill rudely; but I advise you to face it, and not to stop your border at the corner by a rosette or what not. As a rule, you should make it run on, whereby you will at least earn the praise of trying to do your best.

As to the relative proportion of filling and border: if your filling be important in subject, and your cloth large, especially if it be long, your border is best to be narrow, but bright & sparkling, harder & sharper than the filling, but smaller in its members; if, on the contrary, the filling be broken in colour and small in subject, then have a wide border, important in subject, clear and well defined in drawing, but by no means hard in relief.

Remember on this head, once more, that the bigger your cloth is the narrower in comparison should be your border; a wide border has a most curious tendency towards making the whole cloth look small.

So much very briefly about carpet-designing and weaving in general; and, once more, those of you who don't yet know what a pretty pattern is, and who don't care about a pattern, don't be dragooned by custom into having a pattern because it is a pattern, either on your carpets or your curtains, or even your waistcoats. That's the way that you, at present, can help the art of pattern-designing.

I will finish my incomplete catalogue of the crafts that need the pattern-designer by saying a few

words on designing for embroidery & for pottery-painting.

As to embroidery designing, it stands midway between that for tapestry and that for carpets; but as its technical limits are much less narrow than those of the latter craft, it is very apt to lead people into cheap and commonplace naturalism: now, indeed, it is a delightful idea to cover a piece of linen cloth with roses, and jonquils, and tulips, done quite natural with the needle, and we can't go too far in that direction if we only remember the needs of our material & the nature of our craft in general: these demand that our roses and the like, however unmistakably roses, shall be quaint and naïve to the last degree, & also, since we are using specially beautiful materials, that we shall make the most of them, & not forget that we are gardening with silk and gold-thread; and, lastly, that in an art which may be accused by ill-natured persons of being a superfluity of life, we must be specially careful that it shall be beautiful, & not spare labour to make it sedulously elegant of form, and every part of it refined in line and colour.

In pottery-painting we are more than ever in danger of falling into sham naturalistic platitude, since we have no longer to stamp our designs with a rough wood-block on paper or cotton, nor have we to build up our outlines by laying square by square of colour, but, pencil in hand, may do pretty much what we will. So we must be a law to ourselves,



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and when we get a tile or a plate to ornament remember two things: first, the confined space or odd shape we have to work in; & second, the way in which the design has to be executed. As to the first point, if we are not to miss our aim altogether, we must do something ingenious and inventive, something that will at once surprise and please people, which will take hold of their eyes as something new, and force them to look at it. Within these limits we may do as we please, so long as we do not forget, in the next place, that our design has to be pencilled by an instrument difficult to use, but delightful to handle when the difficulty is overcome, a long, sharp-pointed brush charged with heavy colour, which penciling should be done with a firm, deliberate, & decided, but speedy hand.

I feel the more bound to insist on this in pottery-painting because of late a kind of caricature art has been going about in the shape of elaborately painted dishes of the most disastrous design and execution. Most often the designers of these have thought they have done all they need when they have drawn a bunch of flowers or a spray without any attempt at arrangement, and coloured it in imitation of a coarse daub in oils, without the least thought of what pigments were within reach of the pottery-painter. Such things teach nothing but the art of how not to do it.

Now, once more, those of you who are unconscious

that there is any beauty in a pattern painted on pottery can at least help the art by utterly refusing to have any pattern on it; & I beg them earnestly and sincerely to take that amount of trouble.

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You may think that I have been wandering from my point in saying so much about the various crafts for which designs have to be made, rather than treating of the designs in general; but I have not done so by accident, at any rate, but because I want you to understand that I think it of capital importance that a pattern-designer should know all about the craft for which he has to draw. Neither will knowledge only suffice him; he must have full sympathy with the craft and love it, or he can never do honour to the special material he is designing for. Without this knowledge & sympathy the cleverest of men will do nothing but provide platitudes for the public and wanton puzzles for those who execute the work to break their hearts over.

Perhaps a few words on pattern-designing generally may be of some use to some of you, though the chances are you will have heard the same thing said often enough before.

Above all things, avoid vagueness; run any risk of failure rather than involve yourselves in a tangle of poor weak lines that people can't make out. Definite form bounded by firm outline is a necessity for all ornament. If you have any inclination towards that shorthand of picture-painters, which

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they use when they are in a hurry, & which people call sketching, give up pattern-designing, for you have not turn for it. I repeat, do not be afraid of your design or try to muddle it up so that people can scarce see it; if it is arranged on good lines, and its details are beautiful, you need not fear its looking hard so long as it covers the ground well, & is not wrong in colour.

Rational growth is necessary to all patterns, or at least the hint of such growth; & in recurring patterns, at least, the noblest are those where one thing grows visibly and necessarily from another. Take heed in this growth that each member of it be strong and crisp, that the lines do not get thready or flabby or too far from their stock to sprout firmly and vigorously; even where a line ends it should look as if it had plenty of capacity for more growth if so it would.

Again, as to dealing with nature. To take a natural spray of what not and torture it into certain lines, is a hopeless way of designing a pattern. In all good pattern-designs the idea comes first, as in all other designs, e.g., a man says, I will make a pattern which I will mean to give people an idea of a rose-hedge with the sun through it; and he sees it in such and such a way; then, and not till then, he sets to work to draw his flowers, his leaves and thorns, and so forth, and so carries out his idea.

In choosing natural forms be rather shy of certain very obviously decorative ones, e.g., bind-weed,



passion-flower, and the poorer forms of ivy, used without the natural copiousness. I should call these trouble-savers, and warn you of them, unless you are going to take an extra amount of trouble over them. We have had them used so cheaply this long while that we are sick of them.

On the other hand, outlandishness is a snare. I have said that it was good and reasonable to ask for obviously natural flowers in embroidery; one might have said the same about all ornamental work, and further, that those natural forms which are at once most familiar and most delightful to us, as well from association as from beauty, are the best for our purpose. The rose, the lily, the tulip, the oak, the vine, and all the herbs and trees that even we cockneys know about, they will serve our turn better than queer, outlandish, upside-down-looking growths. If we cannot be original with these simple things, we shan't help ourselves out by the uncouth ones.

A very few words as to style. Most true it is that if all art ought to belong specially to its time and nation, this should be, above all, the case with such a comparatively easy art as pattern-designing. Yet I am not so simple as to suppose that we can suddenly build up a style out of the wreck of inanity into which we had fallen a little while ago, without any help from the ages of art. And though I would say loudly, Don't copy any style at all, but make your own; yet you must study the history

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of your art, or you will be nose-led by the first bad copyist of it that you come across. Well, my advice to you in this matter is very simple. Study any or all of the styles that have real growth in them, and as for the others, don't do more than give a passing glance at them, for they can do you no good. From the days of ancient Egypt to the time of the sickness of mediæval art the architectural arts had life & growth in them: study all that as much as you please; but, from the times of the Renaissance onwards, life, growth, and hope are gone from these, and as matters of study you have nothing to do with them. The architectural art that was in use even at the time of the great masters of the Renaissance will mislead you if you try to found any style of pattern-designing upon it, and this in spite of many splendid qualities in itself. It is not the art of hope, but of decay. As to what followed it, and culminated in the bundle of degraded whims falsely called a style, that so fitly expresses the corruption of the days of Louis XV., you need not even look at that in passing. More noble failures will serve your turn better, even for warnings.

If I am speaking to any pattern-designers here, or to those that have any influence over their lives, I should like to remind them of one thing, that the constant designing of recurring patterns is a very harassing business, and should always be supplemented with some distinctly executive work.

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Those who in the present unhappy state of the arts do not design for work which they carry out themselves should relieve their brain by drawing from the human figure, from flowers or landscapes or old pictures, or some such things; by doing something which is not a diagram, but is an end in itself, or they will either suffer terribly or become quite stupid. A friend of mine, who is a Manchester calico-printer, told me the other day that the shifty and clever designers who draw the thousand & one ingenious & sometimes pretty patterns for garment goods which Manchester buys of Paris, have a great tendency to go mad, and often do so; and I cannot wonder at it.

That such a caution as this should be necessary is a woful commentary on the state of those arts on which pattern-designing lives. That the art, whose office it was to give rest and pleasure to the toiling hand should now have become a torment to the wearied brain of man, is a strange inversion of the natural order of things, &, to my mind, points to matters far more serious than would at first sight seem to be wrapped up in the question of designing pretty patterns for our common household goods.

I must ask your patience for a few minutes yet while I say a word or two on these matters, for I have made a compact with myself that I will never address my countrymen on the subject of art without speaking as briefly, but also as plainly as I can,



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on the degradation of labour which I believe to be the great danger of civilization, as it has certainly proved itself to be the very bane of art.

Foresight and goodwill have set on foot many schemes for educating people before they come to working years: for tending them when misfortune or sickness prevents them from working, for amusing them reasonably when they are at leisure from their work: aims that are all good and some necessary to the well-being of our race.

But can they alone touch the heart of the matter, to be sedulous about what people do with their time till they are growing out of childhood into youth, to take pains to add to the pleasure of their few hours of rest, & at the same time never to give a thought to the way in which they spend their working hours (ten hours a day, & a long time it is to spend in wishing we were come to the end of it) between the ages of thirteen and seventy? This, I say, does seem to me a strange shutting of the eyes to one of the main difficulties of life, a strange turning from the great question which all well-wishers to their neighbours ought to ask: how can men gain hope and pleasure in their daily work?

I do not profess to foretell what will happen to the world if we persist in keeping our eyes shut on this point; but one thing I know will happen: the extinction of all art. I say I know it will happen, & indeed it is happening now, and unless we take

the other turn before long it will soon be all done. You would not believe me if I professed to think that a light matter even by itself: the thrusting out of all beauty from the life of man; but when one knows what lies at the bottom of it, how much heavier it seems, the thrusting out of all pleasure and self-respect from man's daily work, the helplessly letting that daily work become a mere blind instrument for the over-peopling of the world, for the ceaseless multiplication of causeless and miserable lives.

Surely I am speaking to some whose lives, like mine, are blessed with pleasurable & honourable work, who cannot bear the thought that we are to go on shutting our eyes to this, and to do nothing because our time on earth is not long. Can we not face the evil and do our best to amend it our very selves? If it be a necessary evil, let us at least do our share of proving that it is so by withstanding it to the utmost. The worst that can happen to us rebels in that case is to be swept away before the flood of that necessity, which will happen to us no less if we do not struggle against it: if we are flunkies, not rebels. Indeed, you may think that the metaphor is all too true, and that we are but mere straws in that resistless flood. But don't let us strain a metaphor; for we are no straws, but men, with each one of us a will and aspirations, and with duties to fulfil; so let us see after all what we can do to prove whether it be necessary that art should perish: that

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is, whether men should live in an ugly world, with no work to do in it but wearisome work.

Well, first we must be conscious of the evil, as I believesome are, who do not dare to acknowledge it. And next we must dare to acknowledge it, as some do who dare not act further in the matter.

And next: why, a good deal next, though it may be put into few words, for steady rebellion is a heavyish matter to take in hand; & I tell you that every one who loves art in these days & dares pursue it to the uttermost is a dangerous rebel enough; and I will finish by speaking of one or two things that we must do to fit ourselves for our troublous life of rebellion.

We ought to get to understand the value of intelligent work, the work of men's hands guided by their brains, and to take that, though it be rough, rather than the unintelligent work of machines or slaves, though it be delicate; to refuse altogether to use machine-made work unless where the nature of the thing made compels it, or where the machine does what mere human suffering would otherwise have to do: to have a high standard of excellence in wares and not to accept makeshifts for the real thing, but rather to go without; to have no ornament merely for fashion's sake, but only because we really think it beautiful, otherwise to go without it; not to live in an ugly and squalid place (such as London) for the sake of mere excitement or the like, but only because our



duties bind us to it; to treat the natural beauty of the earth as a holy thing not to be rashly dealt with for any consideration; to treat with the utmost care whatever of architecture and the like is left us of the times of art. I deny that it can ever be our own to do as we like with; it is the property of the world, that we hold in trust for those that come after us.

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Here is a set of things not easy to do (as it seems), which I believe to be the duty of all men taking some trouble in the art of life, & not giving in to the barbarous and cumbrous luxury, or comfort as you may please to call it, which some of us are so proud of as a mark of our civilization, but which I sometimes think is really fated to stifle all art, and in the long run all intelligence, unless we grow wise in time and look to it.

I dare say that nobody but men who consciously or unconsciously care about art would think of binding themselves by these rules, but perhaps some others may join them in trying to act on these that follow. To have as little as possible to do with middlemen, but to bring together the makers and the buyers of goods as closely as possible. To do our best to further the independence and reasonable leisure of all handicraftsmen. To eschew all bargains, real or imaginary (they are mostly the latter), and to be anxious to pay and to get what a piece of goods is really worth. To that end to try to understand the difference between good & bad

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in wares, which will also give us an insight into the craftsman's troubles, and will tend to do away with an ignorant impatience & ill-temper which is much too common in our dealings with them nowadays.

In short, as I have said before that we must strive against barbarous luxury, so here I must say that we must strive against barbarous waste. What we have to do is to try to put co-operation in the place of competition in the dealings of men; that is, in place of commercial war, with all the waste & injustice of war, which, since men are foolish rather than malicious, has to be softened ever and anon by weak compliance & contemptuous good-nature, we must strive to put commercial peace with justice and thrift beside it.

I ask you not to think that I have been wandering from my point in saying all this: I have had to talk to you to-night about popular art, the foundation on which all art stands. I could not go through the dreary task of speaking to you of a phantom of by-gone times, of a thing with no life in it; I must speak of a living thing with hope in it, or hold my peace; and most deeply am I convinced that popular art cannot live if labour is to be for ever the thrall of muddle, dishonesty, and disunion. Cheerfully I admit that I see signs about us of a coming time of order, goodwill, and union, and it is that which has given me the courage to say to you these few last words, & to hint to you what in my poor judg-

ment we each and all of us who have the cause at heart may do to further the cause.

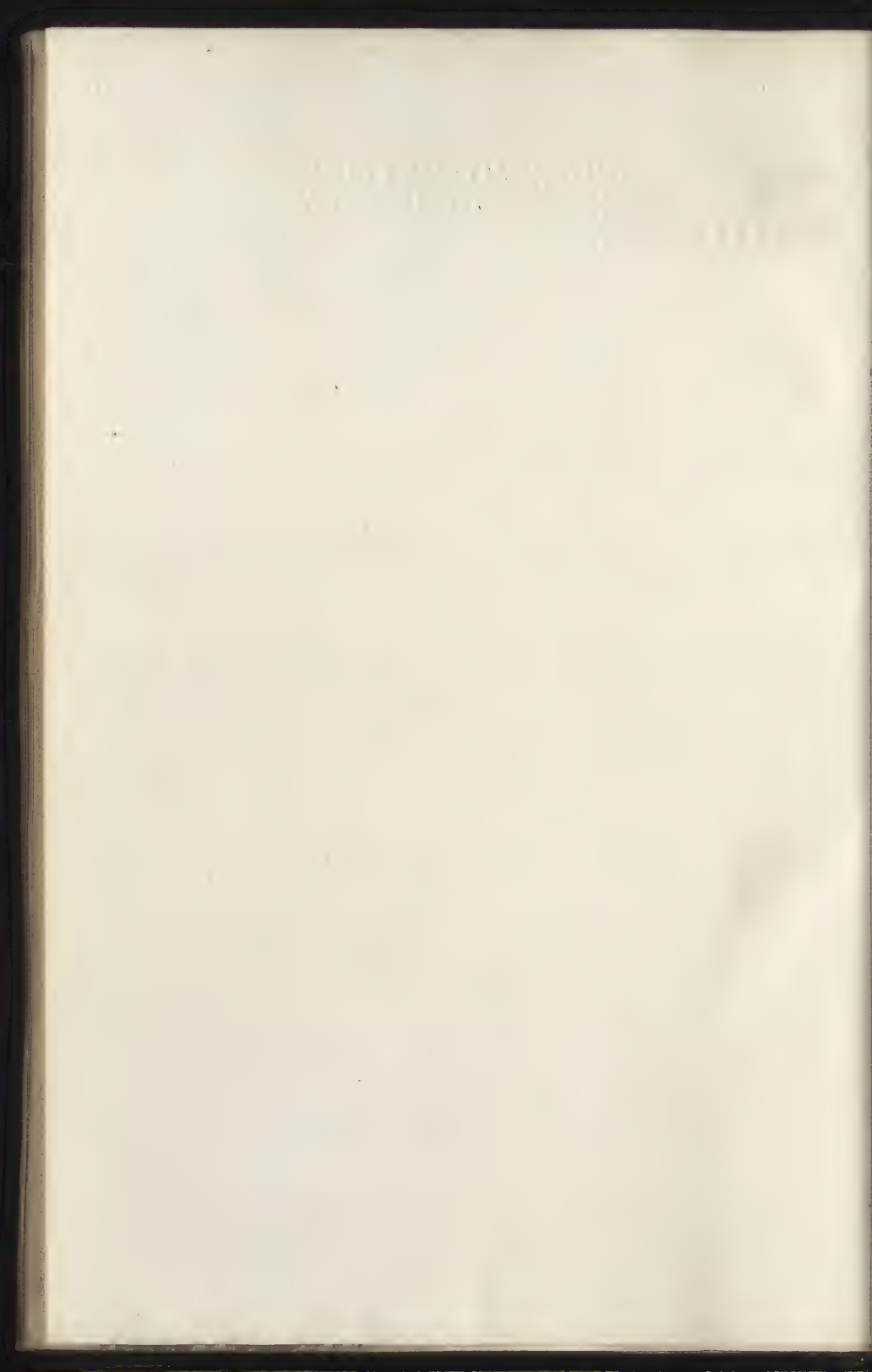
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ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY,  
and WESTMINSTER ABBEY. BY  
WILLIAM MORRIS.





ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY. A  
PAPER READ BEFORE THE SO-  
CIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF  
ANCIENT BUILDINGS, ON JULY 1,  
1884. BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

We of this Society at least know the beauty of the weathered and time-worn surface of an ancient building, and have all of us felt the grief of seeing this surface disappear under the hands of a 'restorer;' but though we all feel this deeply enough, some of us perhaps may be puzzled to explain to the outside world the full value of this ancient surface. It is not merely that it is in itself picturesque and beautiful, though that is a great deal; neither is it only that there is a sentiment attaching to the very face which the original builders gave their work, but dimly conscious all the while of the many generations which should gaze on it; it is only a part of its value that the stones are felt to be, as Mr. Ruskin beautifully puts it, speaking of some historic French building, now probably changed into an academic model of its real self, that they are felt to be 'the very stones which the eyes of St. Louis saw lifted into their places.' That sentiment is much, but it is not all; nay, it is but a part of the especial value to which I wish to-day to call your attention, which value briefly is, that the untouched surface of ancient architecture bears witness to the development of man's ideas, to the continuity of history, and, so doing, affords never-

Lecture IV. Architecture and History. ceasing instruction, nay education, to the passing generations, not only telling us what were the aspirations of men passed away, but also what we may hope for in the time to come.

You all know what a different spirit has animated history in these latter days from that which used to be thought enough to give it interest to thinking men. Time was, and not so long ago, when the clever essay writer (rather than historian) made his history surrounded by books whose value he weighed rather by the degree in which they conformed to an arbitrary standard of literary excellence, than by any indications they might give of being able to afford a glimpse into the past. So treated, the very books were not capable of yielding the vast stores of knowledge of history which they really possessed, if dealt with by the historical method. It is true that for the most part these books were generally written for other purposes than that of giving simple information to those to come after; at their honestest the writers were compelled to look on life through the spectacles thrust on them by the conventional morality of their own times; at their dishonestest, they were servile flatterers in the pay of the powers that were. Nevertheless, though the art of lying has always been sedulously cultivated by the world, and especially by that part of it which lives on the labour of others, it is an art which few people attain to in its perfection, & the honest man by the

use of sufficient diligence can generally manage to see through the veil of sophistry into the genuine life which exists in those written records of the past; nay, the very lies themselves, being for the most part of a rough and simple nature, can often be dissolved and precipitated, so to say, into historical substance, into negative evidence of facts. But the academical historians of whom I have spoken were not fitted for the task; they themselves were cursed with a fatal though unconscious dishonesty; the world of history which they pictured to themselves was an unreal one; to them there were but two periods of continuous order, of organized life: the period of Greek & Roman classical history was one, the time from the development of the retrospection into that period till their own days was the other; all else to them was mere accidental confusion, strange tribes and clans with whom they had no relation, jostling against one another for no purpose save that of a herd of bisons; all the thousands of years devoid of creation, laden only with mere obstruction, and out of that, as I said, two periods of perfection, leaping fully equipped like Pallas from the brain of Zeus. A strange conception, truly, of the history of the 'famous men and our fathers that begat us,' but one which could not hold out long against the natural development of knowledge and society. The mists of pedantry slowly lifted and showed a different picture; inchoate order in the remotest times,

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Lecture IV. varying indeed among different races & countries,  
Architecture but swayed always by the same laws, moving for-  
and History. ward ever towards something that seems the very  
opposite of that which it started from, and yet the  
earlier order never dead but living in the new, and  
slowly moulding it to a recreation of its former  
self. How different a spirit such a view of history  
must create it is not difficult to see. No longer  
shallow mockery at the failures and follies of the  
past, from a standpoint of so-called civilization,  
but deep sympathy with its half-conscious aims,  
from amidst the difficulties and shortcomings that  
we are only too sadly conscious of to-day; that is  
the new spirit of history: knowledge I would fain  
think has brought us humility, and humility hope  
of that perfection which we are obviously so far  
short of.

Now, further, as to the instruments of this new  
knowledge of history, were they not chiefly two:  
study of language and study of archæology? that  
is, of the expression of men's ideas by means of  
speech, & by means of handiwork, in other words  
the record of man's creative deeds. Of the first of  
these instruments, deeply as I am interested in it,  
and especially on the side which, tending towards  
comparative mythology, proclaims so clearly the  
unity of mankind, of this I lack the knowledge to  
speak, even if I had the time; on the second, ar-  
chæology, I am bound to speak, as it is above all  
things the function of our Society to keep before

people's eyes its importance as an instrument of the study of history, which does in very truth lead us towards the solution of all the social and political problems over which men's minds are busied.

I am all the more bound to speak on this subject because, in spite of the ascendancy which the new spirit of history has over cultivated minds, we must not forget that many minds are uncultivated, and in them the pedantic spirit still bears sway; and you will understand that when I speak of uncultivated minds, I am not thinking of the lower classes, as we uncivilly, but too truly, call them, but of many of those who are in responsible positions, and responsible especially as to the guardianship of our ancient buildings; indeed, to meet one conceivable objection, I can understand a man saying that the half-ignorant, half-instructed, & wholly pedantic way of dealing with an ancient building is historical also, and I can admit some logic in the objection. Destruction is, alas! one of the forms of growth; indeed those pedantic historians I have been speaking of had their share also in history, and it is a curious question, which I cannot follow at present, as to how far their destructive pedantry was a sign of strength as compared with our reasonable research and timidity; I say that I cannot follow this question up, though I think it would lead to conclusions astonishing to some people, and so will content myself with saying that if the narrowness, the vulgarity of mind (I know no

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Lecture IV. Architecture and History. other word), which deals with our ancient monuments, as if Art had no past & is to have no future, be an historical development (and I don't gainsay it), so also is the spirit which animates us to resist that vulgarity: 'for this among the rest was I ordained.'

Now, I am sure that, so far I have carried you with me as members of our Society; you cannot doubt that in one way or other the surface of an ancient building, the handling of the old handicraftsman that is, is most valuable and worthy of preservation, and I am sure also that we all feel instinctively that it cannot be reproduced at the present day; that the attempt at reproduction not only deprives us of a monument of history, but also of a work of art. In what follows I have to attempt the task of showing you that this impossibility of reproduction is not accidental, but is essential to the conditions of life at the present day; that it is caused by the results of all past history, and not by a passing taste or fashion of the time; and that consequently no man, and no body of men, however learned they may be in ancient art, whatever skill in design or love of beauty they may have, can persuade, or bribe, or force our workmen of to-day to do their work in the same way as the workmen of King Edward I. did theirs. Wake up Theodoric the Goth from his sleep of centuries, & place him on the throne of Italy; turn our modern House of Commons into the Witen-



agemote (or meeting of the wise men) of King Alfred the Great; no less a feat is the restoration of an ancient building.

Now, in order to show you that this is necessary and inevitable, I am compelled very briefly to touch upon the conditions under which handiwork has been produced from the classical times onward; in doing so I cannot avoid touching on certain social problems, on the solution of which some of you may differ from me. In that case I ask you to remember that though the Committee has ordered me to read this paper to you, it cannot be held responsible for any opinions outside the principles advocated in its published documents. The Society should not be regarded as dangerous, except, perhaps, to the amusements of certain country parsons and squires, and their wives and daughters.

Well, it must be admitted that every architectural work is a work of co-operation. The very designer, be he never so original, pays his debt to this necessity in being in some form or another under the influence of tradition; dead men guide his hand even when he forgets that they ever existed. But furthermore, he must get his ideas carried out by other men; no man can build a building with his own hands; every one of those men depends for the possibility of even beginning his work on someone else; each one is but part of a machine; the parts may be but machines them-

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selves, or may be intelligent, but in either case they must work in subordination to the general body. It is clear that men so working must be influenced in their work by their conditions of life, & the man who organizes their labour must make up his mind that he can only get labour of a kind which those conditions have bred. To expect enthusiasm for good workmanship from men who for two generations have been accustomed by the pressure of circumstances to work slovenly would be absurd; to expect consciousness of beauty from men who for ten generations have not been allowed to produce beauty, more absurd still. The workmanship of every piece of co-operative work must belong to its period, and be characteristic of it. Understand this clearly, which I now put in another form: all architectural work must be co-operative; in all co-operative work the finished wares can be no better in quality than the lowest, or simplest, or widest grade, which is also the most essential, will allow them to be. The kind and quality of that work, the work of the ordinary handicraftsman, is determined by the social conditions under which he lives, which differ much from age to age.

Let us then try to see how they have differed, and glance at the results to Art of that difference; during which inquiry we shall have much more to do with the developed Middle Ages, with the work of which our Society is chiefly concerned, than with any other period.

In the classical period industrial production was chiefly carried on by slaves, whose persons & work alike belonged to their employers, and who were sustained at just such standard of life as suited the interests of the said employers. It was natural that under these circumstances industrialism should be despised; but under Greek civilization, at least, ordinary life for the free citizens, the aristocracy in fact, was simple, the climate was not exacting of elaborate work for the purposes of clothing & shelter, the race was yet young, vigorous, and physically beautiful. The aristocracy, therefore, freed from the necessity of rough & exhausting work by their possession of chattel slaves, who did all that for them, and little oppressed with anxieties for their livelihood, had, in spite of the constant brawling and piracy which forms their external history, both inclination & leisure to cultivate the higher intellectual arts within the limits which their natural love of matter of fact & hatred of romance prescribed to them; the lesser arts, meantime, being kept in rigid, and indeed slavish subordination to them as was natural. May I break off here to ask you to consider, in case any Athenian gentleman had attempted to build a Gothic cathedral in the days of Pericles, what sort of help he would have had from the slave labour of the day, and what kind of Gothic they would have produced for him?

Well, the ideal of art established by the intellect



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of the Greeks with such splendid and overwhelming success lasted throughout the whole Roman period also, in spite of the invention and use of the arch in architecture, or rather in building; and side by side with it chattel slavery, under somewhat changed conditions, produced the ordinary wares of life; the open-mouthed contempt for the results of industrial production expressed by the pedant Pliny, whether it were genuine or artificially deduced from the conventionalities of philosophy, well illustrates the condition of the slave-produced lesser arts of the later classical period.

Meantime, and while Pliny was alive, the intellectual arts of classical times had long fallen from their zenith, and had to wade through weary centuries of academicalism, from which they were at last redeemed by no recurrence of individual genius to the earlier and human period, but by the break-up of classical society itself; which involved the change of chattel slavery, the foundation of classical society, into serfdom or villeinage, on which the feudal system was based. The period of barbarism or disorder between the two periods of order was long doubtless, but the new order rose out of it at last, bright and clear; and in place of the system of aristocratic citizen and chattel slave without rights, dominated by the worship of the city (which was the ideal, the religion of classic society), was formed a system of personal duties and rights, personal service and protection

in obedience to preconceived ideas of mankind's duties to and claims from the unseen powers of the universe. No doubt, as was natural in this hierarchical system, the religious houses, whose distinct duty it was to hold the hierarchical ideal up as a banner amongst imperfect men, fulfilled towards the arts in the earlier Middle Ages, amidst the field-serfs and their lords, the function which in classical times the cultivated Greek free man fulfilled amidst his crowd of enslaved menials. But the serf was in a very different condition from the chattel slave; for, certain definite duties being performed for his lord, he was (in theory at least) at liberty to earn his living as he best could within the limits of his manor. The chattel slave, as an individual, had the hope of manumission, but collectively there was no hope for him but in the complete and mechanical overturn of the society which was founded on his subjection. The serf, on the other hand, was, by the conditions of his labour, forced to strive to better himself as an individual, and collectively soon began to acquire rights amidst the clashing rights of king, lord, and burgher. Also, quite early in the Middle Ages, a new and mighty force began to germinate for the help of labour, the first signs of secular combination among free men, producers, and distributors.

The guilds, whose first beginning in England dates from before the Norman Conquest, al-

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Lecture IV. though they fully recognized the hierarchical conditions of society, and were indeed often in early times mainly religious in their aims, did not spring from ecclesiasticism, nay, in all probability, had their roots in that part of the European race which had not known of Rome and her institutions in the days of her temporal domination. England and Denmark were the foremost countries in the development of the guilds, which took root latest and most feebly in the Latinized countries.

The spirit of combination spread ; the guilds, which at first had been rather benefit societies or clubs than anything else, soon developed into bodies for the protection & freedom of commerce, and rapidly became powerful under the name of merchant guilds; in the height of their power there formed under them another set of guilds, whose object was the regulation and practice of the crafts in freedom from feudal exactions. The older merchant guilds resisted these newer institutions; so much so that in Germany there was bloody and desperate war between them; the great revolt of Ghent, you will remember as an illustration of this hostility, was furthered by the lesser crafts, as Froissart calls them; and again remember that Ghent, the producing city, was revolutionary, Bruges, the commercial one, reactionary. In England the merchant guilds changed in a more peaceable manner, and became in the main the corporations of the towns, and the craft-guilds took their



definite place as regulators and protectors of all handicrafts. By the beginning of the fourteenth century the supremacy of the craft-guilds was complete, and at that period at least their constitution was thoroughly democratic. Mere journeymen there were none, the apprentices were sure, as a matter of course, to take their places as masters of their craft when they had learned it.

Now before we go on to consider the decline and fall of the guilds, let us look at the way in which the craftsman worked at that period: and first a word as to his conditions of life: for I must tell you very briefly that he lived, however roughly, yet at least far easier than his successor does now. He worked for no master save the public, he made his wares from beginning to end himself, & sold them himself to the man who was going to use them. This was the case at least with nearly all, if not all, the goods made in England; some of the rarer goods, such as silk cloth, did come into the chaffering market, which had to be the case all the more for this, that the materials of any country were chiefly wrought into goods close to their birthplace. But even in the cases of these rarer goods they were made primarily for home consumption, and only the overplus came into the hands of the merchant; concerning which latter you must also remember that he was not a mere gambler in the haphazard of supply and demand as he is to-day, but an indispensable distributor

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of goods; he was paid for his trouble in bringing goods from a place where there was more than was needed of them to a country where there was not enough, and that was all; the laws against forestallers and regratters give an idea of how this matter of commerce was looked on in the Middle Ages, as commerce, i.e., not profitmongering. A forestaller was a man who bought up produce to hold it for a rise; a regratter, a man who bought and sold in the same market or within five miles of it. On the advantages of the forestaller to the community it is scarcely necessary to dwell, I think: as to the regratter, it was the view of the benighted people of the Middle Ages that a man who bought, say, a hundredweight of cheese for twopence a pound at nine in the morning & sold it at eleven for threepence was not a specially useful citizen. I confess I am sufficiently old-fashioned and conservative to agree with them on that head, although I cannot help perceiving that all 'business,' properly so called, is now forestalling & regratting, and that we are all the slaves of those delightful and simple professions: so that the criminals of one age have become the benevolent masters of the next.

Well, anyhow, it followed from this direct intercourse between the maker and the consumer of goods, that the public in general were good judges of manufactured wares, and, in consequence, that the art, or religion rather, of adulteration was

scarcely known; at least, it was easy to win the fame of a confessor, if not a martyr, of that noble creed.

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Now, as to the manner of work, there was little or no division of labour in each craft; that I think is some mitigation of the evil, for I look upon it as such, of a man being bound down to one craft for his life long (as he is now also), some mitigation, because, after all, there was plenty of variety in the work of a man who made the whole of a piece of goods himself, instead of making always one little piece of a piece. Also you must note that the freemen of the guilds had their share in the pasture lands of the country, as every free man had. Port Meadow, at Oxford, for instance, was the communal pasture of the freemen of that city. These were the conditions of life and work of the English craftsmen of the fourteenth century. I suppose most of us have declined to accept the picture of him which we have had presented to us by the half ignorant & wholly misleading pedants of whom I have spoken before. We who have studied the remains of his handicraft have been, without any further research, long instinctively sure that he was no priest-ridden, down-trodden savage, but a thoughtful and vigorous man, and in some sense, at least, free. That instinct has been abundantly confirmed by painstaking collectors of facts, like Mr. Thorold Rogers, and we now know that the guild craftsman led the sort of life



Lecture IV. in work and play that we should have expected  
Architecture from the art he produced. He worked, not for the  
and History. profit of a master, but for his own livelihood,  
which, I repeat, he did not find it difficult to earn,  
so that he had a good deal of leisure, and being  
master of his time, his tools, and his material, was  
not bound to turn out his work shabbily, but could  
afford to amuse himself by giving it artistic finish;  
how different that is from mechanical or trade  
finish some of us, at least, have learned, maybe,  
by the way of Weeping Cross. Well, that artistic  
finish or ornament was not venal, it was given  
freely to the public, who, I rather think, paid for  
it by interest in and sympathy for the work itself,  
which, indeed, I consider a good payment in times  
when a man could live otherwise without payment  
more gross and material. For here I must make  
the confession that what is called in modern slang  
the 'wages of genius,' were much neglected by the  
builders of our ancient buildings; for art, as Mr.  
Thorold Rogers justly says, was widespread; the  
possession of some skill in it was the rule and not  
the exception. As a rule, those who could afford  
to pay for a building, were able to do the necessary  
planning and designing, obviously because they  
would naturally find help and harmonious intel-  
ligence among the men they had to employ. For  
instance, the tower of Merton College Chapel at  
Oxford was carried out by ordinary masons, un-  
der the superintendence of the Fellows of the Col-

lege. Well, judging from the wretched tinkering that the present Fellows have allowed to be perpetrated on their beautiful succursal house, St. Albans' Hall, I would not venture to trust the most respectable Fellows of that ancient House with such a job now.

So it followed from this widespread skill in the arts, that those poor wretches who had skill and taste beyond their fellow-workmen, and who in consequence had pleasanter work than they, had to put up with a very moderate additional wage, & in some cases with nothing additional; it seems they could not make good the claim now preferred for that much sinned against, and much sinning, company, men of genius, that the conformation of their stomachs and the make of their skin is different from that of other men, and that consequently they want more to eat and drink and different raiment from their fellows. In most sober earnest, when we hear it said, as it often is said, that extra money payment is necessary under all circumstances to produce great works of art, & that men of special talent will not use those talents without being bribed by mere gross material advantages, we, I say, shall know what to reply. We can appeal to the witness of those lovely works still left to us, whose unknown, unnamed creators were content to give them to the world, with little more extra wages than what their pleasure in their work and their sense of usefulness in it might bestow on them.

Lecture IV. Well, I must now say that it seems to me that a  
Architecture body of artificers, so living as we have seen, & so  
and History. working, with simple machines or instruments,  
of which they were complete masters, had very  
great advantages for the production of architec-  
tural art, using that word at its widest; and that  
one would, reasoning a priori, expect to find in  
their work that thoughtfulness and fertility of re-  
source, that blended freedom and harmonious co-  
operation, which, as a matter of fact, we do find in  
it. Nevertheless, in spite of this free intelligence  
of the mediæval workman, or even because of it,  
he was still compelled to work only as tradition  
would allow him to do. If it could ever have oc-  
curred to anyman's mind to build some new Par-  
thenon or Erechtheum by the banks of Thames,  
or Wharfe, or Wensum, in the fourteenth century,  
how far do you think his fellow-workman's skill  
would have been able to second his folly?

But we must leave the fourteenth century awhile,  
and hurry on in our tale of the workman's lot. I  
have said that the constitution of the craft guild  
was at first thoroughly democratic or fraternal,  
but it did not long remain so. As the towns grew  
bigger and population flowed to them from the  
enfranchised field-serfs and other sources, the old  
craftsmen began to form a separate and privileged  
class in the guilds with their privileged appren-  
tices, and the journeyman at last made his appear-  
ance. After a while the journeymen attempted to



form guilds under the master crafts, as the latter had done under the merchant guilds; but the economic conditions of the time tending now more and more towards manufacturing for a profit, beat them, and they failed. Nevertheless, the conditions of work did not change much, the masters were checked by laws in favour of the journey-men, and wages rather rose than fell all through the fifteenth century; nor did division of labour begin till much later; everywhere the artisan was still an artist.

The beginning of the great change came with the Tudors in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, during which time England, from being a country of tillage cultivated for livelihood, became a grazing country farmed for profit. He who runs may read the tale of this change & its miseries in the writings of More and Latimer. All I need say about it here is, that it had a very direct influence upon the conditions of life and manner of work of the artisans, for the crafts were now flooded by the crowds of landless men, who had nothing but the force of their bodies to live upon, and were obliged to sell that force day by day for what those would give them who certainly would not buy the article labour unless they could make a profit by it. The brutal rapine with which the change of religion in England was carried out; the wanton destruction of our public buildings which accompanied the stealing of our public lands, doubtless

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played its part in degrading what art was still possible under the new conditions of labour. But the Reformation itself was but one of the aspects of the new spirit of the time produced by great economical changes, and which dealt with art and its creator, labour, far more completely than any series of accidents could do, however momentous they might be. The change in the conditions of labour went on speedily, though there was still a good deal of what may be called domestic manufacture; the workmen in the towns got to be more dependent on their employers, more & more mere journeymen, and a great change was coming over the manner of their work; the mere collection of them into big workshops under one master, in itself merely gave economy of space, rent, fire, lighting, and the rest, but it was the prelude to a much greater change; division of labour now began, and speedily gained head. Under the old mediæval conditions the unit of labour was a master craftsman who knew his business from beginning to end; such help as he had was from mere apprentices who were learning their business, and were not doomed to life-long service. But with the new system of master and men came this change, that the unit of production was a group, each member of which depended on every one of the others, and was helpless without them. Under this system, called the division of labour system, a man may be, & often is, condemned for

the whole of his life to make the insignificant portion of an insignificant article of the market. I use the present tense, because this system of division of labour is still going on side by side with the last development of manufacturing for profit, of which more anon.

Now, it is necessary for you to understand that the birth and growth of this division of labour system was no mere accident, was not the result, I mean, of some passing and inexplicable fashion which caused men to desire the kind of work which could be done by such means; it was caused by the economical changes which forced men to produce no longer for a livelihood as they used to do, but for a profit. Almost all goods, all except those made in the most domestic way, had now to go through the market before they reached the users' hands. They were made for sale, not primarily for use, and when I say 'they,' I mean the whole of them; the art in them as well as their mere obvious utility was now become a marketable article, doled out according to the necessities of the capitalist who employed both machine-workman and designer, fettered by the needs of profit; for by this time, you understand, the division of labour had so worked, that instead of all workmen being artists, as they once were, they were divided into workmen who were not artists, and artists who were not workmen.

This change was complete, or nearly so, by the

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Lecture IV. middle of the eighteenth century: it is not necessary for me to trace the gradual degradation of the arts from the fifteenth century to this point. Suffice it to say that it was steady and certain; only where men were more or less outside the great stream of civilization, where life was rude, & production wholly domestic, did the art produced retain any signs of human pleasure: elsewhere pedantry reigned supreme. The picture-painters who were wont to show us, as through windows opened by them, the longings and lives of the saints and heroes, nay, the very heavens & city of God hanging over the earthly city of their love, were turned, what few of them were aught else than pretentious daubers, into courtly flatterers of ill-favoured fine ladies and stupid supercilious lords. As for the architectural arts, what could you expect to get of them from a set of human machines, co-operating indeed, but only for speed and precision of production, and designed for at best by pedants who despised the life of man, & at worst by mechanical drudges, little better in any way than the luckless workmen? Whatever might be expected, nothing was got but that mass of foolish toys and costly ministrations to luxury & ostentation, which has since those days been most worthily contemned under the name of upholstery.

Is that the end of the story of the degradation of the arts? No, there is another act to the drama; worse or better according as to whether you are

contented to accept it as final, or have been stimulated to discontent, that is, hope for something better. I have told you how the workman was reduced to a machine, I have still to tell you how he has been pushed down from even that giddy eminence of self-respect.

At the close of the eighteenth century England was a country that manufactured among other countries that manufactured: her manufactures were still secondary to her merely country life, & were mixed up with it; in fifty years all that was changed, and England was the manufacturing country of the world, the workshop of the world, often so called with much pride by her patriotic sons. Now this strange and most momentous revolution was brought about by the machinery which the chances and changes of the world, too long a tale even to hint at here, forced on our population. You must think of this great machine industry as though on the one hand merely the full development of the effects of producing for profit instead of livelihood, which began in Sir Thomas More's time, yet on the other as a revolutionary change from that of the mere division of labour. The exigencies of my own work have driven me to dig pretty deeply into the strata of the eighteenth-century workshop system, and I could clearly see how very different it is from the factory system of to-day, with which it is commonly confounded; therefore it was with a ready sympathy that I read

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Lecture IV. the full explanation of the change & its tendencies  
Architecture in the writings of a man, I will say a great man,  
and History. whom, I suppose, I ought not to name in this company, but who cleared my mind on several points (also unmentionable here) relating to this subject of labour and its products. But this at least I must say, that whereas under the eighteenth-century division of labour system, a man was compelled to work for ever at a trifling piece of work in a base mechanical way, which, also, in that base way he understood, under the system of the factory and almost automatic machine under which we now live, he may change his work often enough, may be shifted from machine to machine, and scarcely know that he is producing anything at all: in other words, under the eighteenth-century system he was reduced to a machine; under that of the present day he is the slave to a machine. It is the machine which bids him what to do on pain of death by starvation. Yes, and by no means metaphorically so; the machine, for instance, can, if it pleases, if it chooses to hurry, make him walk thirty miles a day instead of twenty, & send him to the workhouse if he refuses.

Now if you ask me ('t is a by question) which is the worst off, the machine workman of the eighteenth century or the slave to the machine of the nineteenth, I am bound to say that I think the latter is. If I gave you my reasons, few of you would agree with me, and I am not sure that you would



allow me to finish this discourse: at any rate they are somewhat complicated. But the question as to which set of workmen produced the better work can be answered with little complication. The machine workman had to be well skilled in his contemptible task at least, the slave to the machine needs but little skill, and, as a matter of fact, his place has been taken by women and children, and what skill is needed in the work goes to the overlooking of the labours of these latter. In short, the present system of the factory and its dominating machine tends to do away with skilled labour altogether.

Here, then, is a strange contrast, which I most seriously invite you to consider, between the craftsman of the Middle Ages and him of to-day. The mediæval man sets to work at his own time, in his own house; probably makes his tool, instrument, or simple machine himself, even before he gets on to his web, or his lump of clay, or what not. What ornament there shall be on his finished work he himself determines, & his mind & hand designs it & carries it out; tradition, that is to say the minds and thoughts of all workmen gone before, this, in its concrete form of the custom of his craft, does indeed guide and help him; otherwise he is free. Nor must we forget that even if he lives in a town, the fields and sweet country come close up to his house, and he at whiles occupies himself in working in them, & more than once or twice in his life

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Lecture IV. he has had to take the bow or brown-bill from the  
Architecture wall, & run his chance of meeting the great secret  
and History. face to face in the ranks of battle; oftenest, indeed,  
in other men's quarrels, yet sometimes in his own,  
nor wholly unsuccessfully then.

But he who has taken his place, how does he work and live? Something of that we all know. There he has to be at the factory gates by the time the bell rings, or he is fined or 'sent to grass.' Nay, not always will the factory gate open to him; unless the master, controlled himself by a market of which he knows little & the 'hand' nothing, allows him space to work in and a machine to work at, he must turn back & knock about the streets, as many thousands are doing to-day in England. But suppose him there, happy before his machine; up and down he has to follow it, day in, day out, & what thoughts he has must be given to something else than his work. I repeat, 'tis as much as he can do to know what thing the machine (not he) is making. Design & ornament, what has he to do with that? Why, he may be tending a machine which makes a decent piece of work, or, on the other hand, may be an accomplice (a very small one) in turning out a blatant piece of knavery and imposture; he will get as much wages for one as the other, nor will one or the other be in the least degree within his control. All the religion, morality, philanthropy, & freedom of the nineteenth century, will not help him to escape that disgrace. Need I say how and

where he lives? Lodged in a sweltering dog-hole, with miles & miles of similar dog-holes between him & the fair fields of the country, which in grim mockery is called 'his.' Sometimes on holidays, bundled out by train to have a look at it, to be bundled into his grimy hell again in the evening. Poor wretch!

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Tell me, then, at what period of this man's working life will you pick him up & set him to imitating the work of the free crafts-guildsman of the fourteenth century, and expect him to turn out work like his in quality?

Well, not to weaken my argument by exaggeration, I admit that though a huge quantity of would-be artistic work is done by this slave of the machine at the bidding of some ridiculous market or other, the crafts relating to building have not reached that point in the industrial revolution; they are an example of my assertion that the eighteenth-century division of labour system still exists, and works side by side with the great factory and machine system. Yet here, too, the progress of the degradation is obvious enough, since the similar craftsmen of the eighteenth century still had lingering among them scraps of tradition from the times of art now lost, while now in those crafts the division of labour system has eaten deep from the architect to the hod-man, and, moreover, the standard of excellence, so far from its bearing any relation to that of the free workman of the guilds, has sunk far below



Lecture IV. that of the man enslaved by division of labour in  
Architecture the eighteenth century, and is not a whit better  
and History. than that of the shoddy-maker of the great indus-  
tries; in short, the workman of the great machine  
industry is the type of labour to-day.

Surely it is a curious thing that while we are ready to laugh at the idea of the possibility of the Greek workman turning out a Gothic building, or a Gothic workman turning out a Greek one, we see nothing preposterous in the Victorian workman producing a Gothic one. And this, although we have any amount of specimens of the work of the Renaissance period, whose workmen, under the pedantic and retrospective direction of the times, were theoretically supposed to be able to imitate the ancient classical work, which imitation, as a matter of fact, turned out obstinately characteristic of their own period, and derived all the merit it had from those characteristics, a curious thing, and perhaps of all the signs of weakness of art at the present day one of the most discouraging. I may be told, perhaps, that the very historical knowledge, of which I have spoken above, & which the pedantry of the Renaissance and eighteenth century lacked, has enabled us to perform that miracle of raising the dead centuries to life again; but to my mind it is a strange view to take of historical knowledge and insight, that it should set us on the adventure of trying to retrace our steps towards the past, rather than give us some glim-

mer of insight into the future; a strange view of the continuity of history, that it should make us ignore the very changes which are the essence of that continuity. In truth, the art of the past cycle, that of the Renaissance, which flickered out at last in the feeble twaddle of the dilettantism of the latter Georges, had about it, as I hinted above, a supercilious confidence in itself, which entirely forbade it to accept as desirable any imitation of style but one, which one was that which it regarded as part of itself. It could make no more choice in style than Greek or Gothic art could; it fully, if tacitly, admitted the evolution of history, accepted the division of labour workman, and so, indeed, did its best, and had a kind of life about it, dreary as that life was, & expressive enough of the stupid but fearless middle class domination which was the essence of the period.

But we, I say, we refuse to admit the evolution of history. We set our slave to the machine to do the work of the free mediæval workman or of the man of the transition period indifferently. We, if no age else, have learnt the trick of masquerading in other men's cast-off clothes, and carry on a strange hypocritical theatrical performance, rather with timid stolidity than with haughty confidence, determined to shut our eyes to everything seriously disagreeable, nor heeding the silent movement of real history which is still going on around and underneath our raree show.

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Lecture IV. Surely such a state of things is a token of change, of change, speedy perhaps, complete certainly; of Architecture and History. the visible end of one cycle & the beginning of another. For, strange to say, here is a society which on its cultivated surface has no distinct characteristics of its own, but floats, part of it hither, part thither, this set of minds drifting toward the beauty of the past, that toward the logic of the future, each tacitly at least believing that they need but count of heads on their side to establish a convention of many, which should rule the world, despite of history and logic, ignoring necessity which has made even their blind feebleness what it is. And all the while beneath this cultivated surface works the great commercial system, which the cultivated look on as their servant and the bond of society, but which really is their master and the breaker-up of society; for it is in itself and in its essence a war, and can only change its character with its death: man against man, class against class, with this motto, 'What I gain you lose,' that war must go on till the great change comes whose end is peace and not war.

And what are we, who are met together here after seven years of humble striving for existence, for leave to do something? Mere straws in that ocean of half-conscious hypocrisy which is called cultivated society? Nay, I hope not. At least, we do not turn round on history & say, This is bad and that is good; I like this and I don't like that; but



rather we say, This was life, and these, the works of our fathers, are material signs of it. That life lives in you, though you have forgotten it; those material signs of it, though you do not heed them, will one day be sought for: & that necessity which is even now forming the society of the time to be, and shall one day make it manifest, has amongst other things forced us to do our best to treasure them, these tokens of life past and present. The society of to-day, anarchical as it is, is nevertheless forming a new order of which we in common with all those who, I will say it, have courage to accept realities and reject shams, are and must be, a part; so that in the long run our work, hopeless as it must sometimes seem to us, will not be utterly lost. For, after all, what is it that we are contending for? The reality of art, that is to say, of the pleasure of the human race. The tendency of the commercial or competitive society, which has been developing for more than three hundred years, has been towards the destruction of the pleasure of life. But that competitive society has at last developed itself so far that, as I have said, its own change and death is approaching, & as one token of the change the destruction of the pleasure of life is beginning to seem to many of us no longer a necessity but a thing to be striven against. On the genuineness and reality of that hope the existence, the reason for existence of our Society depends. Believe me, it will not be possible for a small knot of cultivated

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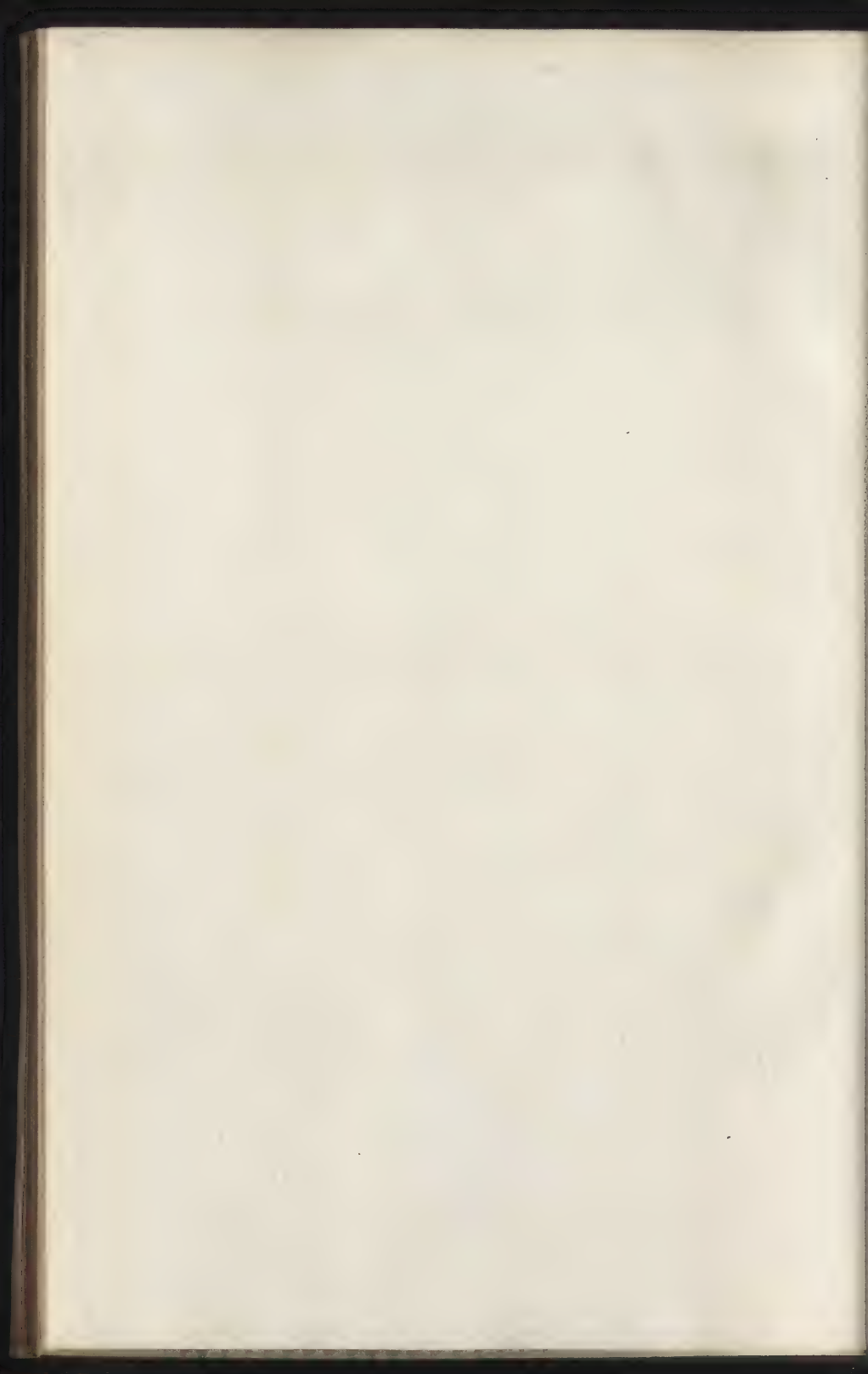
Lecture IV. Architecture and History. people to keep alive an interest in the art & records of the past amidst the present conditions of a sordid and heart-breaking struggle for existence for the many, and a languid sauntering through life for the few. But when society is so reconstituted that all citizens will have a chance of leading a life made up of due leisure and reasonable work, then will all society, and not our 'Society' only, resolve to protect ancient buildings from all damage, wanton or accidental, for then at last they will begin to understand that they are part of their present lives, and part of themselves. That will come when the time is ripe for it; for at present even if they knew of their loss they could not prevent it, since they are living in a state of war, that is to say, of blind waste.

Surely we of this Society have had this truth driven home practically often enough, have often had to confess that if the destruction or brutification of an ancient monument of art & history was 'a matter of money,' it was hopeless striving against it. Do not let us be so feeble or cowardly as to refuse to face this fact, for, for us also, although our function in forming the future of society may be a humble one, there is no compromise. Let us admit that we are living in the time of barbarism betwixt two periods of order, the order of the past & the order of the future, & then, though there may be some of us who think (as I do) that the end of that barbarism is drawing near, and others that it is far

distant, yet we can both of us, I the hopeful and you the unhopeful, work together to preserve what relics of the old order are yet left us for the instruction, the pleasure, the hope of the new. So may the times of present war be less disastrous, if but a little; the times of coming peace more fruitful.

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WESTMINSTER ABBEY. A PAPER  
WRITTEN FOR THE SOCIETY FOR  
THE PROTECTION OF ANCIENT  
BUILDINGS IN JUNE, 1893.

We feel ourselves compelled to call the attention of the public to the present condition and immediate prospects of the Church of St. Peter at Westminster: and this seems to us to be all the more necessary, because the public have scarcely understood the really important considerations which should be kept in mind in dealing with this piece of national property. The idea that is current in most people's minds seems to be that, apart from its function as a place of worship, it is to be used in some way or other as a kind of registration office for the names of men whom the present generation considers eminent in various capacities: the method of so registering them being the placing of a monument to their honour in the church and sometimes burying their corpses beneath the pavement. That this strange notion, which seems to have first taken root about the end of the seventeenth century, and was in full vigour all through the eighteenth and the earlier part of this century, is still alive in most men's minds, is clear from this fact, that now, when even the Dean and Chapter of Westminster have declared that burials in the Abbey must cease, & when it is clear to the most casual observer that the Church is crowded to absurdity with specimens of the gravestone-cutter's

Westminster Abbey. art, the public still think that the corpses of notorieties should be buried & their memories noted, if not in the Abbey, yet at any rate in some building contiguous to it, which is, if possible, to make a pretence of being a part of it. The result of this feeling in the public has been that more than one scheme has been elaborated for providing space for this registration of notables in connection with the Abbey; of which it may be said that the best of them seemed likely to do not much harm to the remains of the ancient Abbey outside the Church, and that the worst intended the actual destruction of part of the Church itself by pulling down the wall of the north aisle in order to foist a nineteenth-century imitation of thirteenth-century architecture on to us as a part of the ancient building. Moreover, it must be said that the ordinary visitor to the Abbey goes there not to see the Church, but the monuments of all kinds that it contains, and the Dean and Chapter understand this so well, that while they throw obstacles in the way of those who want to study the architecture, they arrange for the following the round of the monuments, mostly in the company of a showman after the fashion of Mrs. Jarley. It must be said furthermore that the building suffers from the neglect of the most ordinary measures for keeping it clean and neat, and though it is true that it is difficult to struggle with London filth, yet its worst evils might at least be minimized. If the



revenues of the Chapter are insufficient for dealing with this disadvantage, a public subscription might be opened for the purpose. Westminster Abbey.

We fear, therefore, that in following out this curious superstition of the last two centuries, that it is necessary that Westminster Abbey should serve the purpose of a 'National Valhalla,' the public have neglected all other uses to which this building might serve, except that of a place for the decent celebration of the services of the Church of England; and that they are careless of what damage the Church may suffer, so long as it fulfils these two offices. But this carelessness, as a matter of course, extends to the injury which Westminster Abbey may receive at the hands of those who do see another use for it, viz., the literal reconstruction of lost or damaged features of the architecture of its earlier life; the 'restoration,' as it has been called, of the art of a period very different from ours.

Externally at least, this great Church has, from one reason or another, suffered more from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than most others of its size and dignity: being situated in the centre of government of this country, it has not enjoyed the advantages of boorish neglect which have left so much of interest in mediæval buildings in remoter parts of the country. Every generation, after the decay of living organic art, has added its quota to the degradation of the building.

Westminster Abbey. Setting aside the destruction of furniture and decorations which as a matter of course took place under the two Puritan upheavals, and which was not so complete here as in some churches, the repairs or renewals done at different periods before our own, by men who had no sympathy with the original work, have been sufficiently disastrous to the exterior. The heavy hand of the academical classical architect has been more or less all over the building outside. The north transept, which in the time of Hollar, if one may judge from his curious nondescript engraving, was in a genuine condition, though possibly needing repair greatly, was reduced to the due commonplace ugliness which was then thought to be impressively respectable; the western towers omitted by the mediæval builders were supplied in the same style, having been probably designed by Wren & carried out by Hawksmoor, & remain in good condition, as monuments of the incapacity of seventeenth and eighteenth-century architects to understand the work of their forefathers; and perhaps one might say that they furnish a wholesome lesson to future ages not to attempt the imitation of a past epoch of art. If the architect or architects of these towers had left the Gothic alone & had built the new towers in the queer style of driven-into-a-corner Classic, which is that of the City church towers of or about that date, they certainly would not have jarred our sense of congruity so much as

the quasi-Gothic existing ones do, & also, which Westminster is a great point, they would not have been so ugly. Abbey.

Wren's 'restoration' of the south clerestory also, was to be seen a year or two ago; this had to do with the ornamental features of the windows, which were reduced to the Bible and Prayer-book style of the period, but left the main surface of the walling alone.

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw an important degradation, in the rebuilding of the exterior of Henry VII.'s Chapel by Wyatt; the type of the architects of the first period of Gothic knowledge, who were far more destructive than those of Gothic 'ignorance,' and moreover had no style of their own, & give us examples of the very extreme of academical lifelessness. Mr. Wyatt managed to take all the romance out of the exterior of this most romantic work of the late Middle Ages, and has left us little more than a caput mortuum, an office study of the exterior of the Chapel.

Blore began in 1809 the recasing of the north aisle of the Church, a work which was finished by Gilbert Scott: the two between them completely destroyed all trace of the handiwork of the mediæval masons in this part of the Church.

All these degradations belong to the time before the genuine 'restoration' mania fell upon Westminster Abbey; they are well meant, ill-conceived, and disastrous pieces of repair of various degrees



Westminster of stupidity, culminating in the last mentioned Abbey. wholesale destruction of the thirteenth-century masons' work.

Sir Gilbert (then Mr.) Scott was appointed architect of the Abbey in 1849, by which time the second period of architectural Gothic 'knowledge' had arrived. He 'carefully restored' the Chapter House, that is, he made it (we are speaking of the exterior now), a modern building, imitating with about as much success as is possible in such cases the work of the thirteenth century. It has no longer any claim to be considered a work of art; it is the architect's architecture, the work of the office, in which the executants are in no degree taken into council.

The work of 'restoring' the exterior of the Church was carried on by Mr. Pearson. His work on the south side of the Church is now pretty much complete, and is of the same quality as Sir Gilbert Scott's. But not satisfied with the eighteenth century transmogrification of the north transept (who could be?) and driven by the necessity of making some structural repairs, he carried on the idea of making a conjectural restoration of the north transept, which was begun by Sir Gilbert Scott. This work has now been accomplished, & he who runs may read.

The result is most unsatisfactory. Admitting that the eighteenth-century work was in no way good as an independent work of architecture, it was

nevertheless done by men who put some of their own thought into it, poor as that was; moreover, they had not learned how to forge thirteenth century architecture, and they had retained the outline of the old work, so that between what the eighteenth century left & what it produced, it was of some historical value at least. Its artistic value chiefly lay in the fact, that owing to the action of wind and weather, the surface of it was not unpleasant; & altogether it was so little distracting, that it was no bad preparation to the visitor for the solemn beauty of the interior of the Church.

The work that has taken its place is, as it was bound to be, with such ideas leading its architects, another example of the dead-alive office work of the modern restoring architect, overflowing with surface knowledge of the mediæval work in every detail, but devoid of historic sympathy & true historical knowledge, and with no other aim in view than imitating the inimitable. But this example of the error is made more palpable & absurd by the fact that it is an imitation of very ornate thirteenth century work, including abundance of figure sculpture. Now we must remind our readers that the free carved ornament of the Middle Ages (whether of figures or not) was the handiwork of artists, & whatever their shortcomings might have been, they were expected to, and did express their own conceptions with their own hands; they were undoubtedly the best artists of their time for the work

Westminster  
Abbey.

Westminster in hand; they belonged to no inferior rank of  
Abbey. artists, that is, but were the leaders of their art;  
there were no artists above them, doing work  
more intellectual and educated. Their produc-  
tions, therefore, were always genuine works of art,  
whatever their relative merits might be.

Nor is that all; they were working under the full  
influence of traditions unbroken since the very first  
beginnings of art on this planet; they were entirely  
unable to feign themselves other than they were,  
artists of their own day: any real artist of the pre-  
sent time will at once be able to see what an advan-  
tage this was to them; that the bond of tradition  
was so far from being a fetter, that it left them truly  
free to give form to their thought according to their  
own wishes. Their works still speak for them, and  
show us what a great body of artists of the highest  
skill and sense of beauty was at work amidst the  
scanty populations of mediæval Europe.

It is clear then that the mediæval architect, master  
builder, abbot, or whoever else planned the build-  
ing, could never have been at a serious loss for  
skilful men to decorate his building according to  
the fashion of the time. Let us turn the page and  
see how it stands with us now in this matter. There  
are undoubtedly many clever sculptors (or mod-  
ellers, rather, for they do not as a rule carve their  
own work), in civilized countries; but the capacity  
for designing and executing the subsidiary forms  
of carved ornament has completely departed from



those countries on the one hand, while on the other, Westminster  
the sculptors aforesaid are divorced from archi- Abbey.  
tectural or ornamental work, and most of them  
would consider themselves treated with less than  
due consideration if they were asked to undertake  
it. The few instances in which they have timidly  
attempted to get into some relation with architec-  
ture have had such poor results as clearly to show  
how difficult it is for them to produce any work  
which is not merely isolated and unornamental.

This is so obvious to the architects in need of  
carved work for their imitative restorations that  
they never even attempt to employ artists on their  
work; but a supply has sprung up to meet the de-  
mand, & workmen are employed to produce imi-  
tative Gothic sculpture in which they have no  
interest, & of the spirit of whose prototypes they  
have no understanding; the tangible result of this  
being what is called ecclesiastical sculpture, so ut-  
terly without life or interest that nobody who  
passes under the portal of the church on which it is  
plastered, treats it as a work of art any more than he  
does the clergyman's surplice within the building.  
The restoring architect therefore is in this dilem-  
ma, that what there is of skilful and original sculp-  
ture is not fit for his purpose, and will not make  
ornament; and that what he can have, and which  
professes to be ornament, has no artistic value.  
What is to be done in such a case? The common-  
sense view of it would be that he had better forgo

Westminster Abbey. the ornament. But here he is met by the difficulty that he has set out to make a scientific imitation of, say, a French portal of the thirteenth century, and such portals always had sculpture of such and such subjects on them, so that his restoration will not be thorough unless he has the due amount of quasi-ornament to show. Therefore in the teeth of reason and logic he is compelled to accept the makeshift for the real thing, and as a consequence to leave his work bedizened rather than ornamented.

That this has necessarily been the case with the new front of the north transept at Westminster must be obvious to anyone who understands art; and in spite of all the knowledge and skill of the architects it could not have been otherwise, considering the point they started from. If any such person doubts this, let him compare the new imagery of the porches with the angels high up in the transept within; or let him look at any piece of genuine carving there and compare it with the subsidiary work in the porch; and he will surely see in every line of the first the vigour & pleasure of the hand of the workman, and in the other a joyless putty-like imitation that had better have been a plaster cast.

To sum up then the case of the outside of Westminster Abbey; a long series of blunders of various kinds, all based on a false estimate of the true value of the building, have damaged it so vitally, that

scarcely any of its original surface remains, and we have nothing left us but a mere outline, a ghost, so to say, of what it was. A great misfortune truly, and an irreparable one. What else is left us of the Abbey Church that is still so valuable that we are in a trouble of anxiety lest this also should be taken away from us? Westminster Abbey.

In a few words the interior of the Church is left to us; and this, while the exterior has suffered so grievously as to have been all but entirely destroyed, has been less damaged than many other great churches. In fact, were it not for the result of the mania for monuments, that as aforesaid has been so recklessly indulged in up to the present moment, the interior of the Abbey Church would be comparatively in a very good condition, & would leave little to be desired save the clearing away of the imitative and unoriginal stained glass which has got into the windows at various times, to the great damage of the effect of the church. As to the monuments once more, the burden of their ugliness must be endured, at any rate until the folly of restoration has died out. For the greater part of them have been built into the fabric, and their removal would leave gaps, not so unsightly indeed as these stupid masses of marble, but tempting to the restorer, who would not be contented with merely patching them decently, but would make them excuses for further introduction of modern work. In short, disastrous and disgraceful as these



Westminster Abbey. pieces of undertaker's upholstery are, and though they make us a laughing-stock among nations for our folly in having permitted them to blemish the Church, they protect us from the still greater disaster of the platitudinizing of the whole interior by a 'thorough restoration.'

It is the rumour of the contemplation of this 'thorough restoration' which makes this memorandum of our Society necessary, and we shall have presently to recur to it: but we must first write a few words of recapitulation and of definite explanation of the position of our Society in regard to this matter.

We have stated that amidst the neglect of the general public which Westminster Abbey lies under, there are two views taken of it. The first that it is a convenient receptacle for the monuments of the notorieties that rise up, wax, wane, and set from time to time.

The second that it is a good piece for the exercise and exhibition of the skill of the modern architect, and his scientific knowledge of the methods of design and building of the Middle Ages, which is so complete that it enables him to surmount at one stride the difficulties created by the long lapse of years, and the complete change in ideas and the structure of society, which it has brought about: that in short, Westminster Abbey can be renewed in our time, and that, being renewed, it will be the same Westminster Abbey which the

eyes of Chaucer beheld when he was yet in the flesh. Westminster  
Those we say are two views: is there no third? Abbey.

Yes, there is the view of this Society, which can be stated easily and shortly. It is this: Westminster Abbey in spite of all injuries is a great work of art, valuable to all succeeding generations as long as it holds together; and it can by patience, pains & good judgment be held together for an indefinite time. Moreover the art of it is inextricably interwoven with the history, which has in fact produced it. It may seem strange to some that whereas we can give some distinguished name as the author of almost every injury it has received, the authors of this great epic itself have left no names behind them. For indeed it is the work of no one man, but of the people of south-east England, working in the manner which the traditions of the ages forced upon them. And that is the reason why we must accept as irreparable those injuries which it has received, & which we lament so much. It was the work of the inseparable will of a body of men, who worked as they lived, because they could do no otherwise, and unless you can bring those men back from the dead, you cannot 'restore' one verse of their epic. Rewrite the lost trilogies of Aeschylus, put a beginning and an end to the 'Fight at Finsbury,' finish the Squire's tale for Chaucer, even if you cannot

'call up him that left half-told  
The story of Cambuscan bold,'

Westminster and if you can succeed in that, you may then 're-  
Abbey. store' Westminster Abbey.

But though you cannot restore it, you can preserve it. And we must tell you that to do less than this is to involve yourselves in a great national stupidity, a national crime in fact. For this at least you can do, whatever the condition of the arts among us may be. Care and commonsense will enable you to do that without the expenditure of any great faculty for the production of art.

Lastly, if we are asked if it be worth while to take this trouble, and what is the importance of this piece of architecture, as architecture, or what rank Westminster Abbey takes as a work of art, we can only say, that apart from all the glamour which history & tradition have cast over it, it is a building second to none amongst all the marvels of architectural beauty produced by the Middle Ages. Like all such buildings, its beauty is convincing, and sets criticism aside. And the man who is not moved by it must have resigned the human faculty of letting his eyes convey ideas to his brain.

We must now mention the rumour of 'restoration' of the interior which has alarmed us. Something is certainly in contemplation: but what it is, whether it be needful repair or destructive restoration, we cannot tell you. And this for a very definite reason. Having, in common with the rest of the public, heard the rumour, we thought that we were bound by our position before the public to refuse to accept



mere hearsay, and to obtain definite, detailed, reliable information from the delegated guardians of the Abbey, the Dean and Chapter. We wrote to that body, then, simply as a part of the public that wished for information, and we were met by a refusal to give any information. We must suppose, because the Dean & Chapter misunderstood us, and thought we considered them responsible to us, and not to the public at large, as we certainly do consider them. We can only express a hope that they will tell the public what they intend doing with what is really, if not legally, a piece of national property, as speedily and as directly as they can. It is in this hope that we have delayed calling public attention to the matter for so long; but we feel that it will not admit of indefinite delay, and accordingly put our views before the public.

If we are asked what should be done, our reply is very simple. We believe that one architect, however distinguished and learned, is too heavily burdened by having the sole charge of the Abbey in his hands. We think that a consultation should be called of the best practical architects, builders, and engineers, and that they should report as to the stability of the fabric and what means should be taken to render it thoroughly secure; and, a satisfactory scheme having been agreed on, funds should be obtained from Parliament, or if that were not possible, by subscription from the public at large, for carrying it out without delay. But we

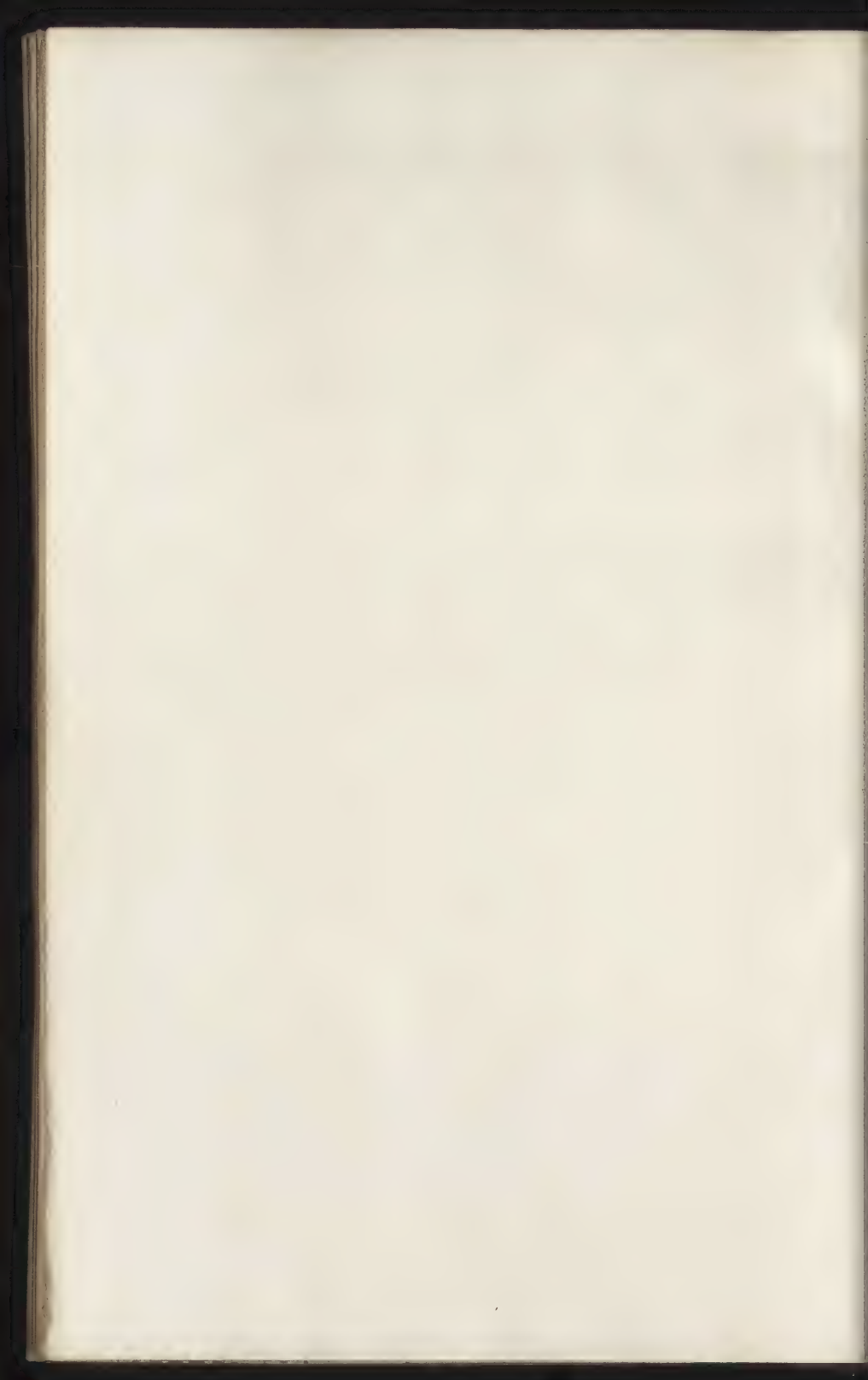
Westminster Abbey. are also sure that such a scheme should disclaim most emphatically any intention of meddling with the ornamental features of the building.

The structural stability having been secured, the Abbey should be kept clean, and otherwise not be touched at all. That is the only thing to do, and there is no second course which would not lead to fresh disaster. Let bygones be bygones, but do not let us enter on a second series of alterations and improvements, which will deprive us at last of all that is now left us of our most beautiful building.

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ART AND ITS PRODUCERS, and THE  
ARTS & CRAFTS OF TODAY: TWO  
ADDRESSES DELIVERED BEFORE  
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE ADVANCEMENT OF ART. BY  
WILLIAM MORRIS.





ART AND ITS PRODUCERS. A LECTURE DELIVERED IN LIVERPOOL IN 1888. BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

I fear what I have to tell you will be looked upon by you as an often-told tale; but it seems to me that at the inception of an enterprise for the popularising and furtherance of the arts of life, the subject-matter of my paper is very necessary to be considered. I will begin by putting before you a kind of text, from which I will speak, so that you may understand from the first the drift of my paper; a plan which, I hope, will save both your time and mine.

Whereas the incentive to labour is usually assumed to be the necessity of earning a livelihood, and whereas in our modern society this is really the only incentive amongst those of the working-class who produce wares of which some form of art is supposed to form a part, it is impossible that men working in this manner should produce genuine works of art. Therefore it is desirable either that all pretence to art should be abandoned in the wares so made, and that art should be restricted to matters which have no other function to perform except their existence as works of art, such as pictures, sculpture, and the like; or else, that to the incentive of necessity to labour should be added the incentives of pleasure and interest in the work itself.

That is my text, and I am quite sure that you will

Lecture V. find it necessary to consider its subject-matter  
Art and its very carefully if you are to do anything save talk  
Producers. about art: for which latter purpose works of art are  
not needed, since so many fine phrases have been  
invented in modern times which answer all the  
purpose of realities.

To put it in another way, the question I ask you  
is threefold. First, shall we pretend to produce  
architecture and the architectural arts without  
having the reality of them? Second, shall we give  
them up in despair or carelessness of having the  
reality? Or, third, shall we set ourselves to have  
the reality?

To adopt the first plan would show that we were  
too careless and hurried about life to trouble our-  
selves whether we were fools (and very tragical  
fools) or not. The adoption of the second would  
ticket us as very honest people, determined to be  
free from as many responsibilities as possible, even  
at the expense of living a dull and vacant life. If  
we adopt the third sincerely, we shall add very  
much to the trouble and responsibility of our lives,  
for a time at least, but also very much to their hap-  
piness. Therefore I am in favour of our adopting  
this third course.

In point of fact, though I have put the second one  
before you for the sake, I fear, of an appearance of  
logical fairness, I do not think we are free to adopt  
it consciously at present, though we may be driven  
to adopt it in the end. To-day I think only the two



courses are open to us, of quietly accepting the presence of an all-pervading art, which indeed pervades the advertising sheets and nothing else; or else of struggling for an art which shall really pervade our lives and make them happier. But since this, if we are in earnest about it, will involve a reconstruction of society, let us first see what these architectural arts really are, and whether they are worth all this trouble; because, if they are not, we had better go on as we are, and shut our eyes to the fact that we are compelled to be such fools as to pretend that we want them when we do not.

The architectural arts, therefore, if they are anything real, mean the addition to all necessary articles of use of a certain portion of beauty and interest, which the user desires to have and the maker to make. Till within a comparatively recent period there has been no question whether this beauty and interest should form a part of wares; it always did do so without any definite order on the part of the user, and not necessarily consciously on the part of the maker; and the sham art which I have spoken of is simply the traditional survival of this reality; that is one reason why you cannot clear yourselves of it in the simple and logical way that I put before you just now as the second course to be adopted.

But the integrity and sincerity of this architectural art, which, mind you, the workman works up with his wares, not only because he must (for he is not

Lecture V.  
Art and its  
Producers.

Lecture V. conscious of compulsion in the matter), but be-  
Art and its cause he likes to, though he is often not conscious  
Producers. of his pleasure...this real architectural art depends  
on the wares of which it forms a part being pro-  
duced by craftsmanship, for the use of persons who  
understand craftsmanship. The user, the con-  
sumer, must choose his wares to be so and so, and  
the maker of them must agree with his choice.  
The fashion of them must not be forced on either  
the user or the maker; the two must be of one  
mind, and be capable under easily conceivable  
circumstances of exchanging their parts of user  
and maker. The carpenter makes a chest for the  
goldsmith one day, the goldsmith a cup for the  
carpenter on another, and there is sympathy in  
their work...that is, the carpenter makes for his  
goldsmith friend just such a chest as he himself  
would have if he needed a chest; the goldsmith's  
cup is exactly what he would make for himself  
if he needed one. Each is conscious during his  
work of making a thing to be used by a man of  
like needs to himself. I ask you to note these state-  
ments carefully, for I shall have to put a contrast  
to these conditions of work presently. Meantime  
observe that this question of ornamental or archi-  
tectural art does not mean, as perhaps most people  
think it does, whether or not a certain amount of  
ornament or elegance shall be plastered on to a  
helpless, lifeless article of daily use...a house, a  
cup, a spoon, or what not. The chest and the cup,

the house, or what not, may be as simple or as rude as you please, or as devoid of what is usually called ornament; but done in the spirit I have told you of, they will inevitably be works of art. In work so done there is and must be the interchange of interest in the occupations of life; the knowledge of human necessities & the consciousness of human good-will is a part of all such work, and the world is linked together by it. The peace of the arts springs from its roots, and flourishes even in the midst of war and trouble and confusion.

Now this is the architectural art which I urge you to think it worth your while to struggle for in all its reality. I firmly believe it is worth the struggle, however burdensome that may be. There are some things which are worth any cost; but above them all I value consciousness of manly life; and the arts form a part of this at least.

This, I say, is the theory of the conditions under which genuine architectural art can be produced; but that theory is founded on a view of the historical development of the industrial arts, and is not merely built up in the air. I must, therefore, now give a brief account of my historical position, although it has been so often done before, that it must be familiar to many, if not most of you. From the beginning of history down to the end of the Middle Ages there has been, as I have said, no question as to whether due form of art should accompany all wares intended to last for any time:



Lecture V. this character of theirs did not in itself enhance Art and its their price or increase the conscious labour upon Producers. them, it was part of their nature to be so, they grew so like a plant grows; during all these ages wares had been made wholly by craftsmanship. It is true that in the ancient world the greater part of the production of wares was the work of chattel slaves, and though the condition of the artizan slaves was very different from that of the field-hands, yet their slavery has fixed its mark clearly enough on the minor arts of the period, in their severe, or literally servile subordination to the higher work done by artists. When chattel slavery passed away from Europe with the classical world and the Middle Ages were fairly born out of the Medean caldron of the confusion that followed; as soon as the formation of the Guilds gave a rallying-point to the workmen, free and serf, of the day, those workmen, the makers of wares, became free in their work, whatever their political position was; and the architectural arts flourished to a degree unknown before, and at least a foretaste was given to the world of what the pleasure of life might be in a society of equals. At this time craftsmanship reached its highest point: the avowed object of the Craft-Guilds, as may be gathered from the irrefragable evidence of their rules, was to distribute whatever work was to hand equitably amongst a society of pure handicraftsmen (we have translated the word now in order to give it a meaning

exactly opposite to its original one) to check the very beginnings of capitalism and competition inside the Guild, and at the same time to produce wares whose test should be the actual use, the real needs of the public of neighbours that was engaged in work carried on in a similar spirit. This manner of work, of producing for use & not for profit, bore its due fruit: as a matter of course, the wares made by the guildsmen of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries have mostly perished; even the most enduring of them, the buildings of their raising, have been either destroyed or degraded by the ignorance and intolerance, the frivolity and the pedantry of succeeding ages; but what is left us, mostly by sheer accident, is enough to teach us the lesson that no cultivation, no share in the science which has in these days subdued nature, as long as it is exterior to the working life of the workman, can supply the place of freedom of hand and thought during his working hours, and interest in the welfare of his work itself; & further, that the collective genius of a people working in free but harmonious co-operation is far more powerful for the production of architectural art than the spasmodic efforts of the greatest individual genius; because with the former the expression of life and pleasure is unforced and habitual, and directly connected with the traditions of the past, and consequently is as unfailing as the work of Nature herself.

But this society of workmen, this crown of labour

Lecture V. of the Middle Ages, was doomed to a short life.  
Art and its Its tendency to equality was so completely extin-  
Producers. guished by the development of the political element in which it lived, that the existence of it has been scarcely suspected before the rise of the school of historical criticism of our own days. Those who, perhaps unwittingly, are wont to trouble themselves about what might have been, may consider the lesser causes that seem to have led to this change, and speculate on what would have happened if the Black Death had not half depopulated north-western Europe; if Philip van Artavelde and his bold Ghentmen had defeated the French chivalry at Rosebeque, as their fathers did at Courtray; if the stout yeomen of Kent and Essex, gathered on 'the Fair-field at Mile-end,' had had wits not quite so simple as to trust the young scoundrel of a king, who had just had their leader murdered under tryst, but had carried out the peasants' war to its due conclusion.

All this is pleasant fooling, but it is little else. The Guild-governed industry must in any case have come to an end as soon as the general longing for new knowledge, greater command over nature, and greater hurry of life, had grown strong enough to force on the next development of productive labour. The Guilds were incapable of the necessary expansion then called for, and they had to disappear, after having contributed largely to the death of the feudal hierarchy, and given birth to



the middle-classes, which took its place as the dominant force in Europe. Capitalism began to grow up within the Guilds, the journeyman, the so-called free-labourer, began to appear in them; and outside them, notably in this country, the land of the country began to be cultivated for the profit of the capitalistic farmer instead of the livelihood of the peasant, and the system of production was created which was needed for carrying on modern society...the society of contract, instead of the society of status. It was essential to this system that the free-labourer should be no longer free in his work; he must be furnished with a master having complete control of that work, as a consequence of his owning the raw material and tools of labour; and with an universal market for the sale of the wares with which he had nothing to do directly, & the very existence of which he was unconscious of. He thus gradually ceased to be a craftsman, a man who in order to accomplish his work must necessarily take an interest in it, since he is responsible for making or marring the wares he has to do with, and whose market was made up chiefly of neighbours, men whose needs he could understand. Instead of a craftsman he must now become a 'hand,' responsible for nothing but carrying out the orders of his foreman. In his leisure hours an intelligent citizen (perhaps), with a capacity for understanding politics, or a turn for scientific knowledge, or what not, but in his working hours

Lecture V. not even a machine, but an average portion of that  
Art and its great & almost miraculous machine... the factory;  
Producers. a man, the interest of whose life is divorced from  
the subject-matter of his labour, whose work has  
become 'employment,' that is, merely the opportunity of earning a livelihood at the will of some one else. Whatever interest still clings to the production of wares under this system has wholly left the ordinary workman, and attaches only to the organisers of his labour; and that interest commonly has little to do with the production of wares as things to be handled, looked at... used, in short, but simply as counters in the great game of the world-market. I fancy that there are not a few of the 'manufacturers' in this great 'manufacturing' district who would be horrified at the idea of using the wares which they 'manufacture,' and if they could be witnesses of the enthusiasm of the customers of the customers of their customers when those wares reached their final destination of use they would perhaps smile at it somewhat cynically.

In this brief account I have purposely left out the gradations by which we have reached the contrast between the craftsman of the Middle Ages & the free workman of to-day; between the productions of wares for direct use and their production as exchange wares for the world-market. I want to lay before you the contrast as clearly as possible; but that I may meet objections, I ought to say that I

am well aware that the process of transformation was gradual; that the new free labourer did not at first have to change his manner of work much; that the system of division of labour was brought to bear on him in the seventeenth century and was perfected in the eighteenth, & that, as that system drew near to perfection, the invention of automatic machinery changed the workman's relation to his work once more, and turned him, in the great staple industries, into the tender of a machine instead of a machine (which I think was to him an advantage); but, on the other hand, brought almost all the surviving handicrafts that had hitherto escaped, under the sway of the system of division of labour, & thus for the time being abolished craftsmanship among the wage-earning classes. Craftsmanship is now all but extinct, except among the professional classes, who claim the position of gentlemen.

If we are in earnest in wishing to make the architectural or decorative arts a reality, we must face these facts as they regard the workman in the first place. But in order to be clear as to what the position of the workman, the producer of such wares, really is, we must also consider that of the consumer of them. For it will perhaps be said, if you desire the production of these wares, there is nothing necessary but to create a demand for them, and then they will come naturally, & once more transform the workman into a craftsman. Now, granted



Lecture V. that such demand is genuine, & also wide enough,  
Art and its that is quite true; but then comes the question  
Producers. whether this genuine and wide demand can be  
created; and if it can be, how it is to be done?

Now, as the present system of production has transformed the handicraftsman into a machine without will, so it has turned the neighbour purchaser with good marketing faculties into a slave of the world-market... a purse. The motto of the modern commercialist being, not the market for man, but man for the market: the market is the master, the man the slave, which to my mind, is reversing the reasonable order of things. Let us see if that is not so. In the present day the great problem which we have to face is the due employment of human labour; if we fail in employing it in some fashion, it will eat us up to begin with, whatever it does afterwards; if we fail to employ it duly we must at least expect to have nothing but a corrupt and degraded society; and for my part I wish we could turn our thoughts to employing labour duly, instead of employing it anyhow. But at any rate we are all practically driven to recognise the fact that, except for a few hundred thousands, who for anything we can do must starve or go to the workhouse, we must look to the employment of labour power, that is, men. Now, I have said just now, and repeat it again with all the emphasis that I can, that the proper employers (or say customers) of the working men are the working men: and if they

had no other customers, I should have perfect confidence that in the long run they would be employed in making nothing but useful things; among which, of course, I include works of art of various kinds: but as they have other customers, I have not that confidence, for I see, no one can fail to see, that they are employed in producing a great deal that is not useful, although it is marketable. They themselves are not as good customers to themselves as they should be, because they are not wealthy enough; all the wares which they consume must be of inferior quality for one thing, let alone their quantity; therefore their custom must be supplemented by that of the well-to-do and the rich classes, and these we will suppose are all of them wealthy enough to satisfy their needs for really desirable things, and they do so: other things the reasonable among them would not demand, if they could help themselves; but from what I can see round about me, I judge that they cannot help themselves. It seems that the market for gambling in profits is too exacting, or the need for the employment of labour is too pressing to allow them to purchase and consume only what they need; they must, in addition, purchase & consume many things which they do not need; habits of pomp and luxury must be formed amongst them, so that the market which would be starved by the misery of the poor, may be kept busy with ministering to the luxury of the rich. And you must understand that

Lecture V. I mean here to assert that though all wares made  
Art and its must be consumed, nevertheless that consump-  
Producers. tion does not prove their use: they may be used, or  
they may be wasted, and if they are not needed,  
they cannot be used and must be wasted.

Here, then, in considering the possibility of the widespread and genuine demand for architectural art, we are met at the outset by this difficulty, that the workmen, who must be the producers of the art, are largely, I will say mostly, employed in wasting their labour in two ways; on the one hand, in making inferior wares, which their inferior position forces them to demand, and for which there ought to be no demand; and on the other, in making wares, not for the use, but for the waste of the rich classes, for which, again, there ought to be no demand. And these two haplessly false demands are forced on to both these classes, because they are forced into the position which so forces them. The world-market, which should be our servant, is our master, and ordains that so it must be. The wide and genuine demand, therefore, for the architectural arts which we have seen can only be produced by the handicraftsman, cannot be created under the present system of production, which, indeed, could not go on if the greater part of its wares were the work of handicraft.

We are driven at last, then, to this conclusion; that pleasure and interest in the work itself are necessary to the production of a work of art however



humble; that this pleasure and interest can only be present when the workman is free in his work, i.e., is conscious of producing a piece of goods suitable to his own needs as a healthy man; that the present system of industrial production does not allow of the existence of such free workmen consciously producing wares for themselves and their neighbours, and forbids the general public to ask for wares made by such men; that, therefore, since neither the producers nor the users of wares are free to make or ask for wares according to their wills, we cannot under our present system of production have the reality of the architectural arts which I have been urging you to strive for, but must put up with pretending to have them; which seems to me a rather sorry proceeding.

What can we do, then, in order to shake off this disgrace; in order that we may be free to say either that we want the ornaments of life, and no make-shifts of them shall content us; or that we do not want them, and will not have them?

If my premises are accepted the practical position is clear; we must try to change the system of the production of wares. To meet possible objections once more, I do not mean by this that we should aim at abolishing all machinery: I would do some things by machinery which are now done by hand, and other things by hand which are now done by machinery: in short, we should be the masters of our machines and not their slaves, as we are now.

Lecture V. It is not this or that tangible steel & brass machine Art and its which we want to get rid of, but the great intangible Producers. machine of commercial tyranny, which oppresses the lives of all of us. Now, this enterprise of rebelling against commercialism I hold to be a thoroughly worthy one: remember what my text was, and how I said that our aim should be to add to the incentive of necessity for working, the incentive of pleasure and interest in the work itself. I am not pleading for the production of a little more beauty in the world, much as I love it, and much as I would sacrifice for its sake; it is the lives of human beings that I am pleading for; or if you will, with the Roman poet, the reasons for living. In this assembly there are perhaps only a few who can realise the meaning of the daily drudgery, hopeless of any result except the continuance of a life of drudgery, which is the lot of all but a few in our civilisation; for indeed it is only possible to be realised by experience or strong imagination; but do your best to realise it, & then further to realise the result of turning those daily hours of hopeless toil into days of pleasant work, the happy exercise of manly energies, illuminated by the certainty of usefulness & the hope of applause from the friends and neighbours for whom it is exercised. Surely when you have thought of this seriously you will once more have to admit that the attainment of such a change is worth almost any sacrifice. I say again, as I have often said, that if the world cannot

hope to be happy in its work it must relinquish the hope of happiness altogether.

Again, the aim of those who look on the popular arts seriously is, that we should be masters of our work, and be able to say what we will have and what we will do; and the price which we must pay for the attainment of that aim is, to speak quite plainly, the recasting of society. For that mechanical and tyrannous system of production which I have condemned is so intimately interwoven with the society of which we all form a part, that it sometimes shows as its cause, & sometimes as its effect, and is in any case a necessity to it; you cannot abolish the slums of our great cities; you cannot have happy villagers living in pretty houses among the trees, doing pretty-looking work in their own houses or in the pleasant village workshop between seed-time & harvest, unless you remove the causes that have made the brutal slum-dweller and the starveling field labourer. All essential conditions of society, the growth of ages as they are, must bring about certain consequences which cannot be dealt with by mere palliation. The essentials of ancient society involved the chattel slave, those of mediæval society the serf, those of modern society the irresponsible wage-worker under a master; and the latter cannot by efforts from without be set to do work which does not belong to his condition of dependency on a master; the craftsman is responsible for his work, and a dependent cannot be



Lecture V. responsible for anything save the fulfilment of the  
Art and its task set him by his master.

Producers. But lest you may think I show no course for you  
to take except striving, as I do, towards the con-  
scious reconstruction of society on a basis of equal-  
ity, I will say a word or two on work which may lie  
ready to our hands as artists rather than as citizens.  
There is a small body of men who are independent  
in their work, who are called by the name I have  
just used ... artists: as a separate group they are the  
result of the commercial system which could not  
use independent workmen, and their divorce from  
the ordinary production of wares is the obvious  
external cause of the sickness of the architectural  
arts. Anyhow, they exist as independent work-  
men, the loose screw in their position being that  
they do not work for the whole public, but for a  
very small portion of it, which rewards them for  
that exclusiveness by giving them the position of  
gentlemen. Now it seems to me that the only thing  
we can do, if we will not help in the reconstruction  
of society, is to deal with this group of gentlemen  
workmen. The non-gentlemen workmen are be-  
yond our reach unless we look on the matter from  
the wider point of view, but we can try to get the  
artists to take an interest in those arts of life whose  
production at present is wholly in the hands of the  
irresponsible machines of the commercial system,  
and to understand that they, the artists, however  
great they may be, ought to be taking part in this

production; while the workmen who are now machines ought to be artists, however humble. On the other hand we may try to dig up whatever of responsibility & independence lies half smothered under the compact clay of the factory system, to find out if there are not some persons in the employ of the commercial organisers who are artists, to give them opportunities if possible of working more directly for the public, and to win for them that applause & sympathy of their brother artists which every good workman naturally desires. The idea that this may and can be done is by no means mine alone; in putting it forward I represent not merely a vague hope that it may be attempted, but an actual enterprise in good working order. I have the honour to belong to a small and unpretentious society, of which Mr. Crane is President, which, under the name of the Arts and Crafts Society, has just carried out a successful exhibition of what are called 'the applied arts' in London, with the definite intention of furthering the purpose I have just stated. To some of us such work may seem very petty and unheroic, especially if they have been lately brought face to face with the reckless hideousness and squalor of a great manufacturing district; or have been so long living in the shabby hell of the great commercial centre of the world that it has entered into their life & they are now 'used to it,' that is, degraded to its miserable standard: but it is something to do at least, for it means keeping

Lecture V. alive the spark of life in these architectural arts  
Art and its for a better day; which arts might otherwise be  
Producers. wholly extinguished by commercial production,  
a disaster which not many years ago seemed most  
likely to happen. But I think this lesser work will  
be so far from hindering us, that it will rather draw  
us on to engaging in the wider and deeper matter,  
and doing our best towards the realisation of that  
Society of Equals, which, as I have already said,  
will form the only conditions under which true  
craftsmanship can be the rule of production; that  
form of work which involves the pleasurable exer-  
cise of our own energies, and the sympathy with  
the capacities and aspirations of our neighbours,  
that is, of humanity generally.



THE ARTS AND CRAFTS OF TODAY.  
BEING AN ADDRESS DELIVERED IN  
EDINBURGH IN OCTOBER, 1889. BY  
WILLIAM MORRIS.

'Applied Art' is the title which the Society has chosen for that portion of the arts which I have to speak to you about. What are we to understand by that title? I should answer that what the Society means by applied art is the ornamental quality which men choose to add to articles of utility. Theoretically this ornament can be done without, and art would then cease to be 'applied' ... would exist as a kind of abstraction, I suppose. But though this ornament to articles of utility may be done without, man up to the present time has never done without it, and perhaps never will; at any rate he does not propose to do so at present, although, as we shall see presently, he has got himself into somewhat of a mess in regard to his application of art. Is it worth while for a moment or two considering why man has never thought of giving up work which adds to the labour necessary to provide him with food and shelter, and to satisfy his craving for some exercise of his intellect? I think it is, and that such consideration will help us in dealing with the important question which once more I must attempt to answer, 'What is our position towards the applied arts in the present, and what have we to hope for them and from them in the future?'

Now I say without hesitation that the purpose of

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applying art to articles of utility is twofold: first, to add beauty to the results of the work of man, which would otherwise be ugly; and secondly, to add pleasure to the work itself, which would otherwise be painful and disgusting. If that be the case, we must cease to wonder that man should always have striven to ornament the work of his own hands, which he must needs see all round about him daily and hourly; or that he should have always striven to turn the pain of his labour into a pleasure wherever it seemed possible to him.

Now as to the first purpose: I have said that the produce of man's labour must be ugly if art be not applied to it, and I use the word ugly as the strongest plain word in the English language. For the works of man cannot show a mere negation of beauty; when they are not beautiful they are actively ugly, and are thereby degrading to our manlike qualities; and at last so degrading that we are not sensible of our degradation, and are therefore preparing ourselves for the next step downward. This active injury of non-artistic human work I want especially to fix in your minds; so I repeat again, if you dispense with applying art to articles of utility, you will not have unnoticeable utilities, but utilities which will bear with them the same sort of harm as blankets infected with the small-pox or the scarlet-fever, and every step in your material life and its 'progress' will tend towards the intellectual death of the human race.

Of course you will understand that in speaking of the works of man, I do not forget that there are some of his most necessary labours to which he can not apply art in the sense wherein we are using it; but that only means that Nature has taken the beautifying of them out of his hands; and in most of these cases the processes are beautiful in themselves if our stupidity did not add grief and anxiety to them. I mean that the course of the fishing-boat over the waves, the plough-share driving the furrow for next year's harvest, the June swathe, the shaving falling from the carpenter's plane, all such things are in themselves beautiful, and the practice of them would be delightful if man, even in these last days of civilisation, had not been so stupid as to declare practically that such work (without which we should die in a few days) is the work of thralls and starvelings, whereas the work of destruction, strife, and confusion, is the work of the pick of the human race ... gentlemen to wit.

But if these applied arts are necessary, as I believe they are, to prevent mankind from being a mere ugly & degraded blotch on the surface of the earth, which without him would certainly be beautiful, their other function of giving pleasure to labour is at least as necessary, and, if the two functions can be separated, even more beneficent and indispensable. For if it be true, as I know it is, that the function of art is to make labour pleasurable, what is the position in which we must find ourselves with-



Lecture VI. out it? One of two miseries must happen to us:  
The Arts either the necessary work of our lives must be car-  
and Crafts ried on by a miserable set of helots for the benefit  
of Today. of a few lofty intellects; or if, as we ought to do, we  
determine to spread fairly the burden of the curse  
of labour over the whole community, yet there the  
burden will be, spoiling for each one of us a large  
part of that sacred gift of life, every fragment of  
which, if we were wise, we should treasure up and  
make the most of (and allow others to do so) by  
using it for the pleasurable exercise of our energies,  
which is the only true source of happiness.

Let me call your attention to an analogy between  
the function of the applied arts and a gift of nature  
without which the world would certainly be much  
unhappier, but which is so familiar to us that we  
have no proper single word for it, and must use a  
phrase; to wit, the pleasure of satisfying hunger.  
Appetite is the single word used for it, but is clear-  
ly vague and unspecific: let us use it, however, now  
we have agreed as to what we mean by it.

By the way, need I apologise for introducing so  
gross a subject as eating and drinking? Some of you  
perhaps will think I ought to, and are looking for-  
ward to the day when this function also will be civil-  
ised into the taking of some intensely concentrated  
pill once a year, or indeed once in a life-time, leaving  
us free for the rest of our time to the exercise of our  
intellect... if we chance to have any in those days.

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From this height of cultivated aspiration I respectfully beg to differ, and in all seriousness, and not in the least in the world as a joke, I say that the daily meeting of the house-mates in rest and kindness for this function of eating, this restoration of the waste of life, ought to be looked on as a kind of sacrament, and should be adorned by art to the best of our powers: and pray pardon me if I say that the consciousness that there are so many people whose lives are so sordid, miserable, and anxious, that they cannot duly celebrate this sacrament, should be felt by those that can, as a burden to be shaken off by remedying the evil, and not by ignoring it. Well now, I say, that as eating would be dull work without appetite, or the pleasure of eating, so is the production of utilities dull work without art, or the pleasure of production; and that it is Nature herself who leads us to desire this pleasure, this sweetening of our daily toil. I am inclined to think that in the long-run mankind will find it indispensable; but if that turn out to be a false prophecy, all I can say is that mankind will have to find out some new pleasure to take its place, or life will become unendurable, and society impossible. Meantime it is reasonable & right that men should strive to make the useful wares which they produce beautiful just as Nature does; and that they should strive to make the making of them pleasant, just as Nature makes pleasant the exercise of the necessary functions of

Lecture VI. sentient beings. To apply art to useful wares, in  
The Arts short, is not frivolity, but a part of the serious busi-  
and Crafts ness of life.  
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Now let us see in somewhat more detail what applied art deals with. I take it that it is only as a matter of convenience that we separate painting and sculpture from applied art: for in effect the synonym for applied art is architecture, and I should say that painting is of little use, and sculpture of less, except where their works form a part of architecture. A person with any architectural sense really always looks at any picture or any piece of sculpture from this point of view; even with the most abstract picture he is sure to think, How shall I frame it, and where shall I put it? As for sculpture, it becomes a mere toy, a *tour de force*, when it is not definitely a part of a building, executed for a certain height from the eye, and to be seen in a certain light. And if this be the case with works of art which can to a certain extent be abstracted from their surroundings, it is, of course, the case *a fortiori* with more subsidiary matters. In short, the complete work of applied art, the true unit of the art, is a building with all its due ornament and furniture; and I must say from experience that it is impossible to ornament duly an ugly or base building. And on the other hand I am forced to say that the glorious art of good building is in itself so satisfying, that I have seen many a building that needed little ornament, wherein all that seemed needed for its



complete enjoyment was some signs of sympathetic and happy use by human beings: a stout table, a few old-fashioned chairs, a pot of flowers will ornament the parlour of an old English yeoman's house far better than a wagon load of Rubens will ornament a gallery in Blenheim Park.

Only remember that this forbearance, this restraint in beauty, is not by any means necessarily artless: where you come upon an old house that looks thus satisfactory, while no conscious modern artist has been at work there, the result is caused by unconscious unbroken tradition: in default of that, in will march that pestilential ugliness I told you of before, and with its loathsome pretence and hideous vulgarity will spoil the beauty of a Gothic house in Somersetshire, or the romance of a peel tower on the edge of a Scotch loch; and to get back any of the beauty and romance (you will never get it all back) you will need a conscious artist of to-day, whose chief work, however, will be putting out the intrusive rubbish and using the white-washing brush freely.

Well, I repeat that the unit of the art I have to deal with is the dwelling of some group of people, well-built, beautiful, suitable to its purpose, & duly ornamented and furnished, so as to express the kind of life which the inmates live. Or it may be some noble and splendid public building, built to last for ages, and it also duly ornamented so as to express the life & aspirations of the citizens; in itself a great

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piece of history of the efforts of the citizens to raise a house worthy of their noble lives, and its mere decoration an epic wrought for the pleasure and education, not of the present generation only, but of many generations to come. This is the true work of art... I was going to say of genuine civilisation, but the word has been so misused that I will not use it... the true work of art, the true masterpiece of reasonable and manly men conscious of the bond of true society that makes everything each man does of importance to every one else.

This is, I say, the unit of the art, this house, this church, this town-hall, built and ornamented by the harmonious efforts of a free people: by no possibility could one man do it, however gifted he might be: even supposing the director or architect of it were a great painter and a great sculptor, an unfailing designer of metal work, of mosaic, of woven stuffs and the rest... though he may design all these things, he cannot execute them, and something of his genius must be in the other members of the great body that raises the complete work: millions on millions of strokes of hammer and chisel, of the gouge, of the brush, of the shuttle, are embodied in that work of art, and in every one of them is either intelligence to help the master, or stupidity to foil him hopelessly. The very masons laying day by day their due tale of rubble and ashlar may help him to fill the souls of all beholders with satisfaction, or may make his paper design a

folly or a nullity. They and all the workmen engaged in the work will bring that disaster about in spite of the master's mighty genius, unless they are instinct with intelligent tradition; unless they have that tradition, whatever pretence of art there is in it will be worthless. But if they are working backed by intelligent tradition, their work is the expression of their harmonious co-operation and the pleasure which they took in it: no intelligence, even of the lowest kind, has been crushed in it, but rather subordinated and used, so that no one from the master designer downwards could say, This is my work, but every one could say truly, This is our work. Try to conceive, if you can, the mass of pleasure which the production of such a work of art would give to all concerned in making it, through years and years it may be (for such work cannot be hurried); and when made there it is for a perennial pleasure to the citizens, to look at, to use, to care for, from day to day and year to year.

Is this a mere dream of an idealist? No, not at all; such works of art were once produced, when these islands had but a scanty population, leading a rough and to many (though not to me) a miserable life, with a 'plentiful lack' of many, nay most, of the so-called comforts of civilisation; in some such way have the famous buildings of the world been raised; but the full expression of this spirit of common and harmonious work is given only during the comparatively short period of the developed

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Lecture VI. Middle Ages, the time of the completed combination of the workmen in the guilds of craft.  
The Arts And now if you will allow me I will ask a question  
and Crafts of Today. or two, and answer them myself.

1. Do we wish to have such works of art? I must answer that we here assembled certainly do, though I will not answer for the general public.

2. Why do we wish for them? Because (if you have followed me so far) their production would give pleasure to those that used them and those that made them: since if such works were done, all work would be beautiful and fitting for its purpose, and as a result most labour would cease to be burdensome.

3. Can we have them now as things go? Can the present British Empire, with all its power and all its intelligence, produce what the scanty, half-barbarous, superstitious, ignorant population of these islands produced with no apparent effort several centuries ago? No; as things go we cannot have them; no conceivable combination of talent and enthusiasm could produce them as things are.

Why? Well, you see, in the first place, we have been engaged for at least one century in loading the earth with huge masses of 'utilitarian' buildings, which we cannot get rid of in a hurry; we must be housed, and there are our houses for us; and I have said you cannot ornament ugly houses. This is a bad hearing for us.

But supposing we pulled these utilitarian houses

down, should we build them up again much better? I fear not, in spite of the considerable improvement in taste which has taken place of late years, and of which this Congress is, I hope, an indication amongst others. Lecture VI.  
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If the ugly utilitarian buildings abovesaid were pulled down, and we set about building others in their place, the new ones would assuredly be of two kinds: one kind would be still utilitarian in fact, though they might affect various degrees and kinds of ornamental style; and they would be at least as bad as those which they replaced, and in some respects would be worse than a good many of the older ones; would be flimsier in building, more tawdry, and more vulgar than those of the earlier utilitarian style. The other kind would be designed by skilful architects, men endowed with a sense of beauty, & educated in the history of past art, and they would doubtless be far better in form than the utilitarian abortions we have been speaking of; but they would lack the spirit of the older buildings of which I have spoken above. Let that pass for the moment. I will recur to it presently.

For one thing I am sure would immediately strike us in our city rebuilt at the end of the nineteenth century. The great mass of the building would be of the utilitarian kind, & only here and there would you find an example of the refined and careful work of the educated architects; the Eclectic style, if you will allow me so to call it. That is all our rebuild-

Lecture VI. ing would come to; we should be pretty much  
The Arts where we are now, except that we should have lost  
and Crafts some solid straightforwardly ugly buildings, and  
of Today. gained a few elegantly eccentric ones, 'not under-  
stood of the people.'

How is this? Well, the answer to that question will answer the 'why' of a few sentences back.

The mass of our houses would be utilitarian and ugly even if we set about the work of housing ourselves anew, because tradition has at last brought us into the plight of being builders of base and degrading buildings, and when we want to build otherwise we must try to imitate work done by men whose traditions led them to build beautifully; which I must say is not a very hopeful job.

I said just now that those few refined buildings which might be raised in a rebuilding of our houses, or which, to drop hypothesis, are built pretty often now, would lack, or do lack, the spirit of the mediæval buildings I spoke of. Surely this is obvious: so far from being works of harmonious combination as effortless as any artistic work can be, they are, even when most successful, the result of a constant conflict with all the traditions of the time. As a rule the only person connected with a work of architecture who has any idea of what is wanted in it is the architect himself; and at every turn he has to correct and oppose the habits of the mason, the joiner, the cabinet-maker, the carver, etc., and to try to get them to imitate painfully the habits of



the fourteenth-century workmen, and to lay aside their own habits, formed not only from their own personal daily practice, but from the inherited turn of mind and practice of body of more than two centuries at least. Under all these difficulties it would be nothing short of a miracle if those refined buildings did not proclaim their eclecticism to all beholders. Indeed, as it is, the ignorant stare at them wondering; fools of the Podsnap breed laugh at them; harsh critics pass unkind judgments on them. Don't let us be any of these: when all is said they do much credit to those who have designed them and carried them out in the teeth of such prodigious difficulties; they are often beautiful in their own eclectic manner: they are always meant to be so: shall we find fault with their designers for trying to make them different from the mass of Victorian architecture? If there was to be any attempt to make them beautiful, that difference, that eccentricity, was necessary. Let us praise their eccentricity & not deride it, we whose genuine tendency is to raise buildings which are a blot on the beautiful earth, an insult to the common sense of cultivated nineteenth century humanity. Allow me a parenthesis here. When I look on a group of clean well-fed middle-class men of that queer mixed race that we have been in the habit of calling the Anglo-Saxon (whether they belong to the land on this side of the Atlantic or the other); when I see these noble creatures, tall, wide-shouldered, and well-

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knit, with their bright eyes and well moulded features, these men full of courage, capacity, and energy, I have been astounded in considering the houses they have thought good enough for them, and the pettiness of the occupations which they have thought worthy of the exercise of their energies. To see a man of those inches, for example, bothering himself over the exact width of a stripe in some piece of printed cloth (which has nothing to do with its artistic needs) for fear it might not just hit the requirements of some remote market, tyrannised over by the whims of a languid creole or a fantastic negro, has given me a feeling of shame for my civilised middle-class fellow-man, who is regardless of the quality of the wares which he sells, but intensely anxious about the profits to be derived from them.

This parenthesis, to the subject of which I shall presently have to recur, leads me to note here that I have been speaking chiefly about architecture, because I look upon it, first as the foundation of all the arts, and next as an all embracing art. All the furniture and ornament which goes to make up the complete unit of art, a properly ornamented dwelling, is in some degree or other beset with the difficulties which hamper nowadays the satisfactory accomplishment of good and beautiful building. The decorative painter, the mosaicist, the window artist, the cabinetmaker, the paperhanging-maker, the potter, the weaver, all these have

to fight with the traditional tendency of the epoch in their attempt to produce beauty, rather than marketable finery, to put artistic finish on their work rather than trade finish. I may, I hope, without being accused of egotism, say that my life for the last thirty years has given me ample opportunity for knowing the weariness and bitterness of that struggle.

For, to recur to my parenthesis, if the captain of industry (as it is the fashion to call a business man) thinks not of the wares with which he has to provide the world-market, but of profit to be made from them, so the instrument which he employs as an adjunct to his machinery, the artisan, does not think of the wares which he (and the machine) produces as wares, but simply as livelihood for himself. The tradition of the work which he has to deal with has brought him to this, that instead of satisfying his own personal conception of what the wares he is concerned in making should be, he has to satisfy his master's view of the marketable quality of the said wares. And you must understand that this is a necessity of the way in which the workman works; to work thus means livelihood for him; to work otherwise means starvation. I beg you to note that this means that the realities of the wares are sacrificed to commercial shams of them, if that be not too strong a word. The manufacturer (as we call him) cannot turn out quite nothing and offer it for sale, at least in the

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Now we won't concern ourselves about other makeshifts, however noxious to the pleasure of life they may be: let those excuse them that profit by them. But if you like to drink glucose beer instead of malt beer, and to eat oleo-margarine instead of butter; if these things content you, at least ask yourselves what in the name of patience you want with a makeshift of art!

Indeed I began by saying that it was natural and reasonable for man to ornament his mere useful wares & not to be content with mere utilitarianism; but of course I assumed that the ornament was real, that it did not miss its mark, and become no ornament. For that is what makeshift art means, and that is indeed a waste of labour.

Try to understand what I mean: you want a ewer and basin, say: you go into a shop and buy one; you probably will not buy a merely white one; you will scarcely see a merely white set. Well, you look at several, and one interests you about as much as another: that is, not at all; and at last in mere weariness you say, 'Well, that will do'; and you

have your crockery with a scrawl of fern leaves and convolvulus over it which is its 'ornament.' The said ornament gives you no pleasure, still less any idea; it only gives you an impression (a mighty dull one) of bedroom. The ewer also has some perverse stupidity about its handle which also says bedroom, and adds respectable: and in short you endure the said ornament, except perhaps when you are bilious and uncomfortable in health. You think, if you think at all, that the said ornament has wholly missed its mark. And yet that isn't so; that ornament, that special form which the ineptitude of the fern scrawl and the idiocy of the handle has taken, has sold so many dozen or gross more of that toilet set than of others, and that is what it is put there for; not to amuse you, you know it is not art, but you don't know that it is trade finish, exceedingly useful... to everybody except its user and its actual maker.

But does it serve no purpose except to the manufacturer, shipper, agent, shopkeeper, etc.? Ugly, inept, stupid, as it is, I cannot quite say that. For if, as the saying goes, hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue, so this degraded piece of trade finish is the homage which commerce pays to art. It is a token that art was once applied to ornamenting utilities, for the pleasure of their makers and their users.

Now we have seen that this applied art is worth cultivating, and indeed that we are here to cultivate

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it; but it is clear that, under the conditions above spoken of, its cultivation will be at least difficult. For the present conditions of life in which the application of art to utilities is made imply that a very serious change has taken place since those works of cooperative art were produced in the Middle Ages, which few people I think sufficiently estimate.

Briefly speaking, this change amounts to this, that Tradition has transferred itself from art to commerce... that commerce which has now embraced the old occupation of war, as well as the production of wares. But the end proposed by commerce is the creation of a market-demand, and the satisfaction of it when created for the sake of the production of individual profits: whereas the end proposed by art applied to utilities, that is, the production of the days before commerce, was the satisfaction of the genuine spontaneous needs of the public, and the earning of individual livelihood by the producers. I beg you to consider these two ideas of production, and you will then see how wide apart they are from one another. To the commercial producer the actual wares are nothing; their adventures in the market are everything. To the artist the wares are everything; his market he need not trouble himself about; for he is asked by other artists to do what he does do, what his capacity urges him to do.

The ethics of the commercial person (squaring themselves of course to his necessities) bid him give as little as he can to the public, and take as much



as he possibly can from them: the ethics of the artist bid him put as much of himself as he can in every piece of goods he makes. The commercial person, therefore, is in this position, that he is dealing with a public of enemies; the artist, on the contrary, with a public of friends and neighbours.

Again, it is clear that the commercial person must chiefly confine his energies to the war which he is waging; the wares that he deals in must be made by instruments; as far as possible by means of instruments without desires or passions, by automatic machines, as we call them. Where that is not possible, and he has to use highly-drilled human beings instead of machines, it is essential to his success that they should imitate the passionless quality of machines as long as they are at work; whatever of human feeling may be irrepressible will be looked upon by the commercial person as he looks upon grit or friction in his non-human machines, as a nuisance to be abated. Need I say that from these human machines it is futile to look for art? Whatever feelings they may have for art they must keep for their leisure... that is, for the very few hours in the week when they are trying to rest after labour and are not asleep; or for the hapless days when they are out of employment and are in desperate anxiety about their livelihood.

Of these men, I say, you cannot hope that they can live by applying art to utilities: they can only apply the sham of it for commercial purposes; and I may

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say in parenthesis, that from experience I can guess what a prodigious amount of talent is thus wasted. For the rest you may consider, and workmen may consider, this statement of mine to be somewhat brutal: I can only reply both to you and to them, that it is a truth which it is necessary to face. It is one side of the disabilities of the working class, and I invite them to consider it seriously.

Therefore (as I said last year at Liverpool), I must turn from the great body of men who are producing utilities, and who are debarred from applying art to them, to a much smaller group, indeed a very small one. I must turn to a group of men who are not working under masters who employ them to produce for the world-market, but who are free to do as they please with their work, and are working for a market which they can see and understand, whatever the limitations may be under which they work: that is the artists.

They are a small and a weak body, on the surface of things obviously in opposition to the general tendency of the age; debarred, therefore, as I have said, from true cooperative art: & as a consequence of this isolation heavily weighted in the race of success. For cooperative tradition places an artist at the very beginning of his career in a position wherein he has escaped the toil of learning a huge multitude of little matters difficult, nay impossible to learn otherwise: the field which he has to dig is not a part of a primeval prairie, but ground made

fertile and put in good heart by the past labour of countless generations. It is the apprenticeship of the ages, in short, whereby an artist is born into the workshop of the world.

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We artists of to-day are not so happy as to share fully in this apprenticeship: we have to spend the best part of our lives in trying to get hold of some 'style' which shall be natural to us, and too often fail in doing so; or perhaps oftener still, having acquired our 'style,' that is, our method of expression, become so enamoured of the means, that we forget the end, and find that we have nothing to express except our self-satisfaction in the possession of our very imperfect instrument; so that you will find clever and gifted men at the present day who are prepared to sustain as a theory, that art has no function but the display of clever executive qualities, and that one subject is as good as another. No wonder that this theory should lead them into the practice of producing pictures which we might pronounce to be clever, if we could understand what they meant, but whose meaning we can only guess at, and suppose that they are intended to convey the impression on a very short-sighted person of divers ugly incidents seen through the medium of a London fog.

Well I admit that this is a digression, as my subject is Applied Art, and such art cannot be applied to anything; and I am afraid, indeed, that it must be considered a mere market article.



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Thus we artists of today are cut off from cooperative tradition, but I must not say that we are cut off from all tradition. And though it is undeniable that we are out of sympathy with the main current of the age, its commercialism, yet we are (even sometimes unconsciously) in sympathy with that appreciation of history which is a genuine growth of the times, and a compensation to some of us for the vulgarity and brutality which beset our lives; and it is through this sense of history that we are united to the tradition of past times.

Past times; are we reactionists, then, anchored in the dead past? Indeed I should hope not; nor can I altogether tell you how much of the past is really dead. I see about me now evidence of ideas recurring which have long been superseded. The world runs after some object of desire, strives strenuously for it, gains it, and apparently casts it aside; like a kitten playing with a ball, you say. No, not quite. The gain is gained, and something else has to be pursued, often something which once seemed to be gained and was let alone for a while. Yet the world has not gone back; for that old object of desire was only gained in the past as far as the circumstances of the day would allow it to be gained then. As a consequence the gain was imperfect; the times are now changed, and allow us to carry on that old gain a step forward to perfection: the world has not really gone back on its footsteps, though to some it has seemed to do so. Did the world go back, for in-

stance, when the remnant of the ancient civilisations was overwhelmed by the barbarism which was the foundation of modern Europe? We can all see that it did not. Did it go back when the logical and orderly system of the Middle Ages had to give place to the confusion of incipient commercialism in the sixteenth century? Again, ugly and disastrous as the change seems on the surface, I yet think it was not a retrogression into prehistoric anarchy, but a step upward along the spiral, which, and not the straight line, is, as my friend Bax puts it, the true line of progress.

So that if in the future that shall immediately follow on this present we may have to recur to ideas that to-day seem to belong to the past only, that will not be really a retracing of our steps, but rather a carrying on of progress from a point where we abandoned it a while ago. On that side of things, the side of art, we have not progressed; we have disappointed the hopes of the period just before the time of abandonment: have those hopes really perished, or have they merely lain dormant, abiding the time when we, or our sons, or our sons' sons, should quicken them once more?

I must conclude that the latter is the case, that the hope of leading a life ennobled by the pleasurable exercise of our energies is not dead, though it has been for a while forgotten. I do not accuse the epoch in which we live of uselessness: doubtless it was necessary that civilised man should turn himself

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Lecture VI. to mastering nature and winning material advantages undreamed of in former times; but there are signs in the air which show that men are not so wholly given to this side of the battle of life as they used to be. People are beginning to murmur & say: 'So we have won the battle with nature; where then is the reward of victory? We have striven and striven, but shall we never enjoy? Man that was once weak is now most mighty. But his increase of happiness, where is that? who shall show it to us, who shall measure it? Have we done more than change one form of unhappiness for another, one form of unrest for another? We see the instruments which civilisation has fashioned; what is she going to do with them? Make more and more and yet more? To what avail? If she would but use them, then indeed were something done. Meantime what is civilisation doing? Day by day the world grows uglier, and where in the passing day is the compensating gain? Half-conquered nature forced us to toil, and yet for more reward than the sustenance of a life of toil; now nature is conquered, but still we force ourselves to toil for that bare unlovely wage: riches we have won without stint, but wealth is as far from us as ever, or it may be farther. Come then, since we are so mighty, let us try if we can not do the one thing worth doing; make the world, of which we are a part, somewhat happier.' This is the spirit of much that I hear said about me, not by poor or oppressed men only, but by



those who have a good measure of the gains of civilisation. I do not know if the same kind of feeling was about in the earlier times of the world; but I know that it means real discontent, a hope, partly unconscious, of better days: and I will be bold to say that the spirit of this latter part of our century is that of fruitful discontent, or rebellion; that is to say, of hope. And of that rebellion we artists are a part; and though we are but few, and few as we are, mere amateurs compared with the steady competency of the artists of bygone times, yet we are of some use in the movement towards the attainment of wealth, that is toward the making of our instruments useful.

For we, at least, have remembered what most people have forgotten amongst the ugly unfruitful toil of the age of makeshifts, that it is possible to be happy, that labour may be a pleasure; nay, that the essence of pleasure abides in labour if it be duly directed; that is if it be directed towards the performance of those functions which wise & healthy people desire to see performed; in other words, if mutual help be its moving principle.

Well, since it is our business, as artists, to show the world that the pleasurable exercise of our energies is the end of life and the cause of happiness, and thus to show it which road the discontent of modern life must take in order to reach a fruitful home, it seems to me that we ought to feel our responsibilities keenly. It is true that we cannot but share in

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the poverty of this age of makeshifts, and for long I fear we can be little but amateurs. Yet, at least each in his own person, we may struggle against makeshifts in art. For instance, to press a little home on ourselves, if drawing is our weak point, let us try to improve ourselves on that side, and not proclaim that drawing is nothing and tone is everything. Or if we are bad colourists, let us set to work & learn, at least, to colour inoffensively (which I assure you can be learned), instead of jeering at those who give us beautiful colour habitually and easily. Or if we are ignorant of history, and without any sense of romance, don't let us try to exalt those deficiencies into excellencies by maintaining the divinity of the ugly and the stupid. Let us leave all such unworthy shabbinesses to the Philistines & pessimists, who naturally want to drag everybody down to their level.

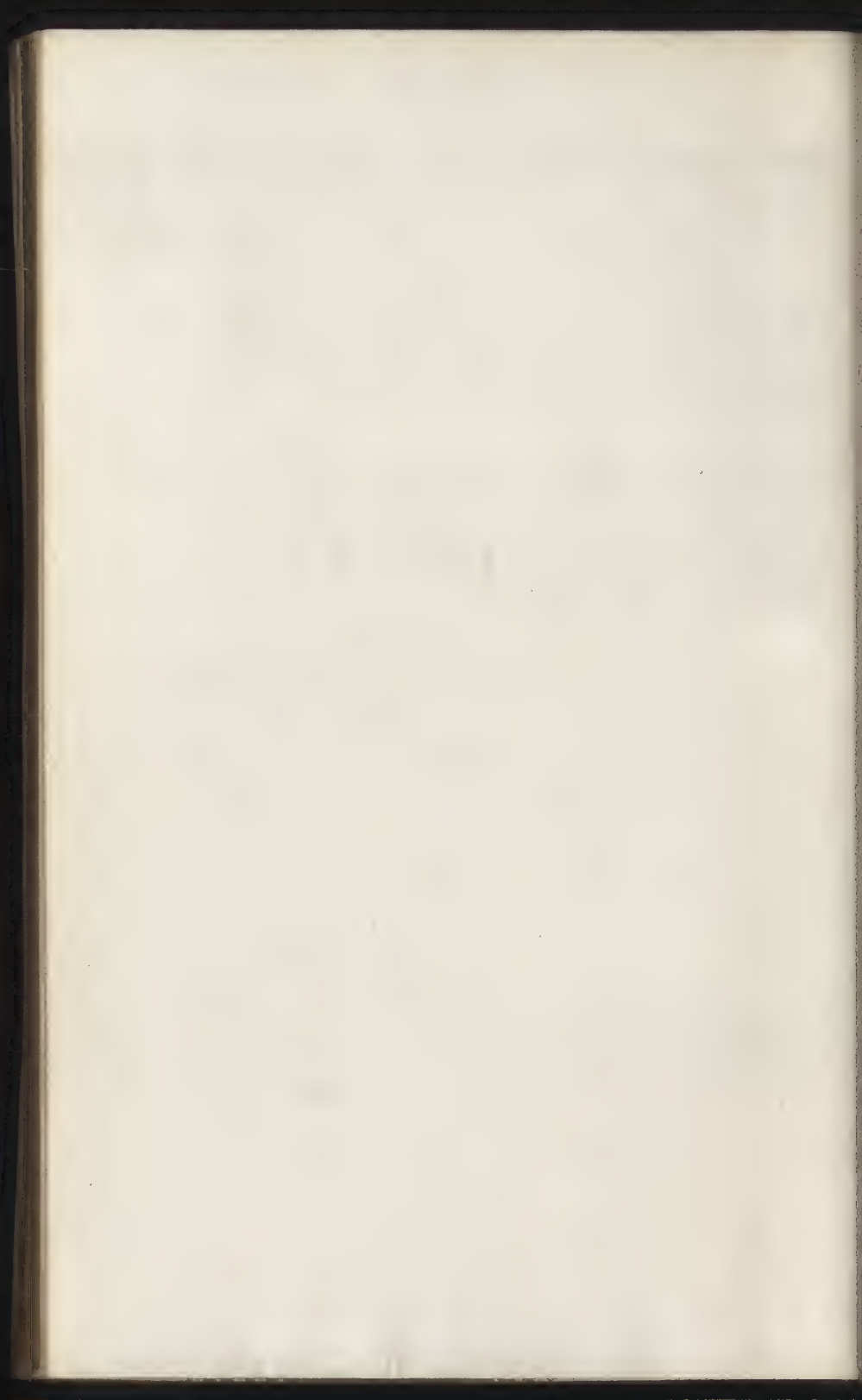
In short, we artists are in this position, that we are the representatives of craftsmanship which has become extinct in the production of market wares. Let us therefore do our very best to become as good craftsmen as possible; and if we cannot be good craftsmen in one line, let us go down to the next, and find our level in the arts, and be good in that; if we are artists at all, we shall be sure to find out what we can do well, even if we cannot do it easily. Let us educate ourselves to be good workmen at all events, which will give us real sympathy with all that is worth doing in art, make us free of that

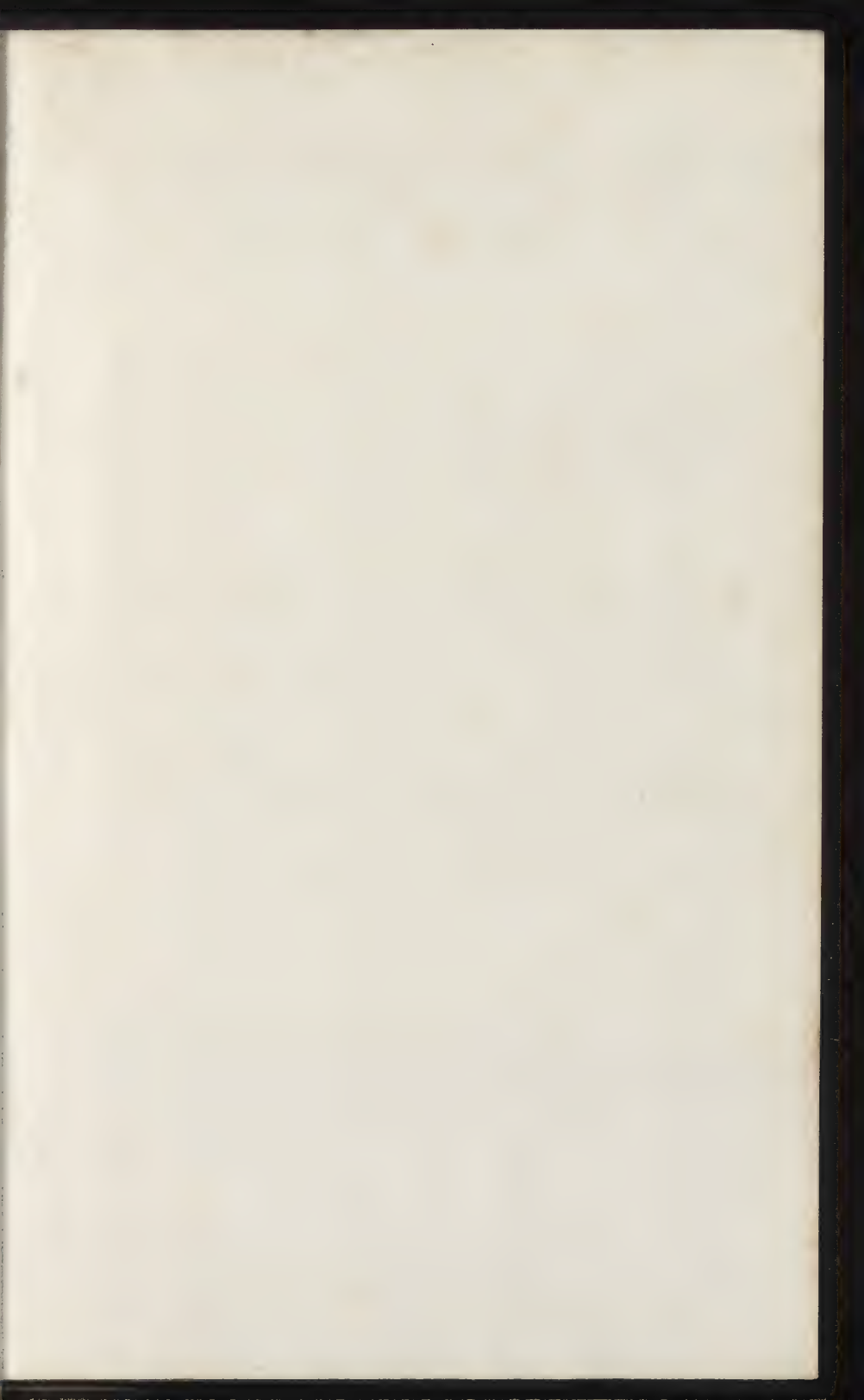
great corporation of creative power, the work of all ages, and prepare us for that which is surely coming, the new cooperative art of life, in which there will be no slaves, no vessels to dishonour, though there will necessarily be subordination of capacities, in which the consciousness of each one that he belongs to a corporate body, working harmoniously, each for all, and all for each, will bring about real and happy equality.

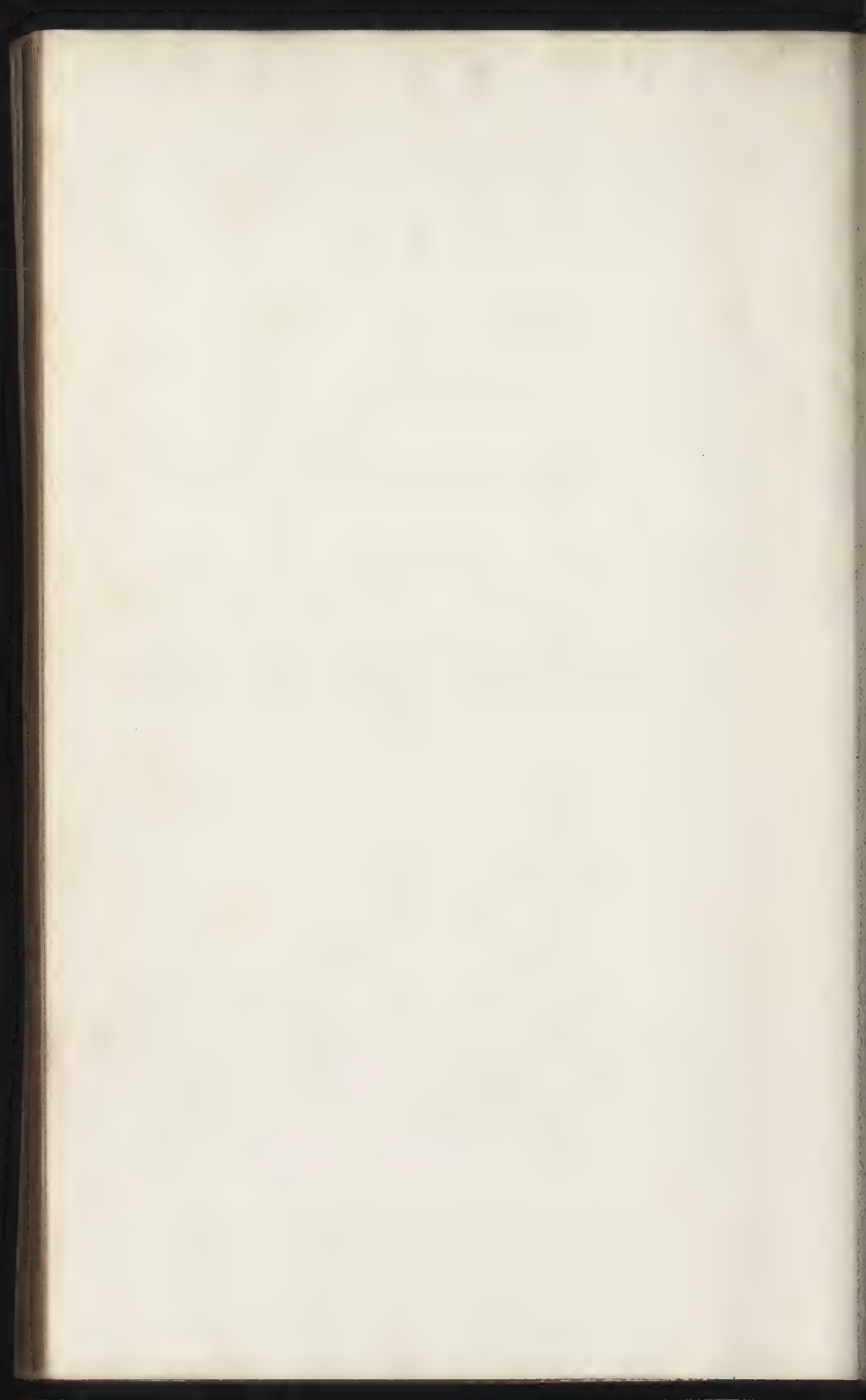
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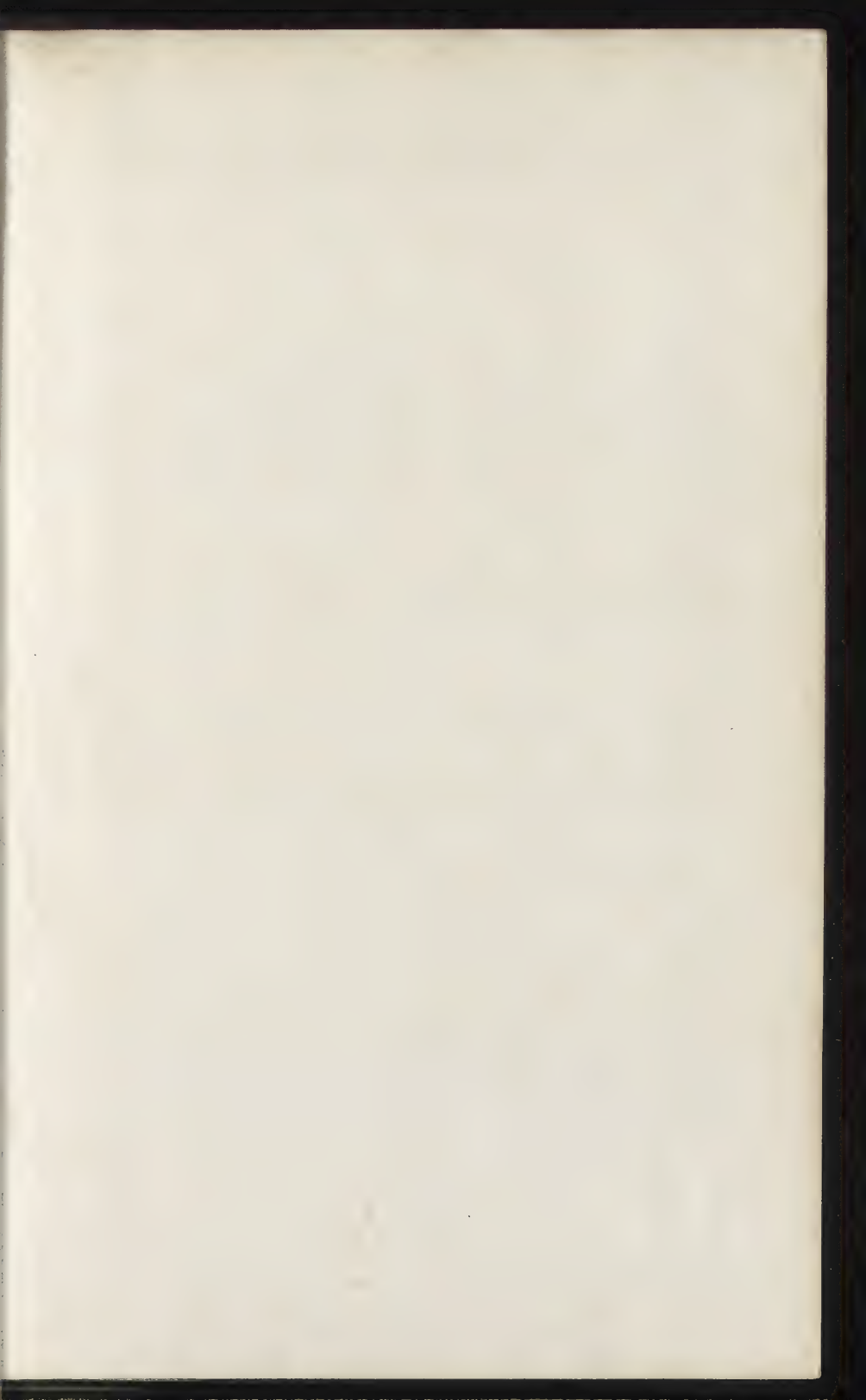


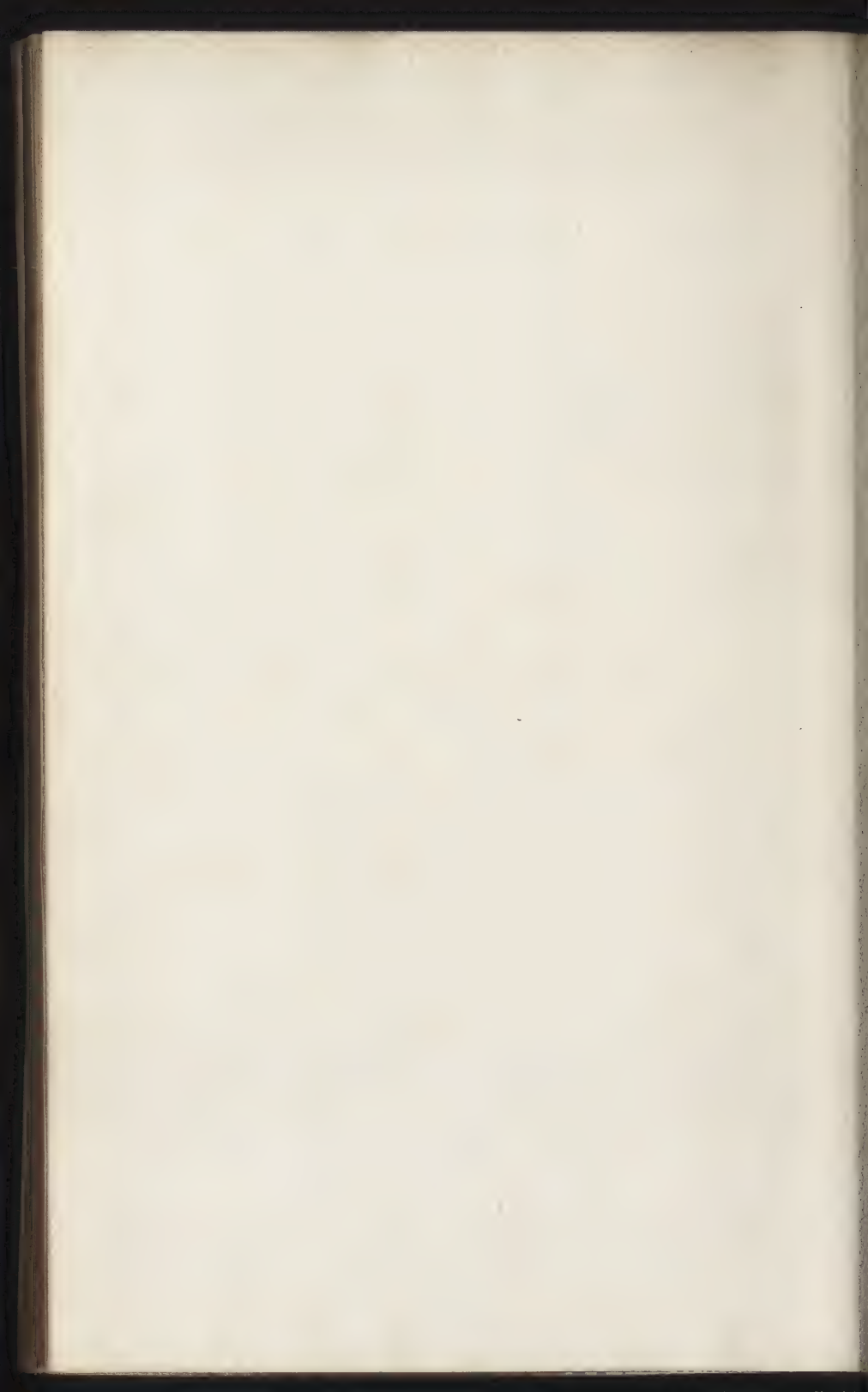


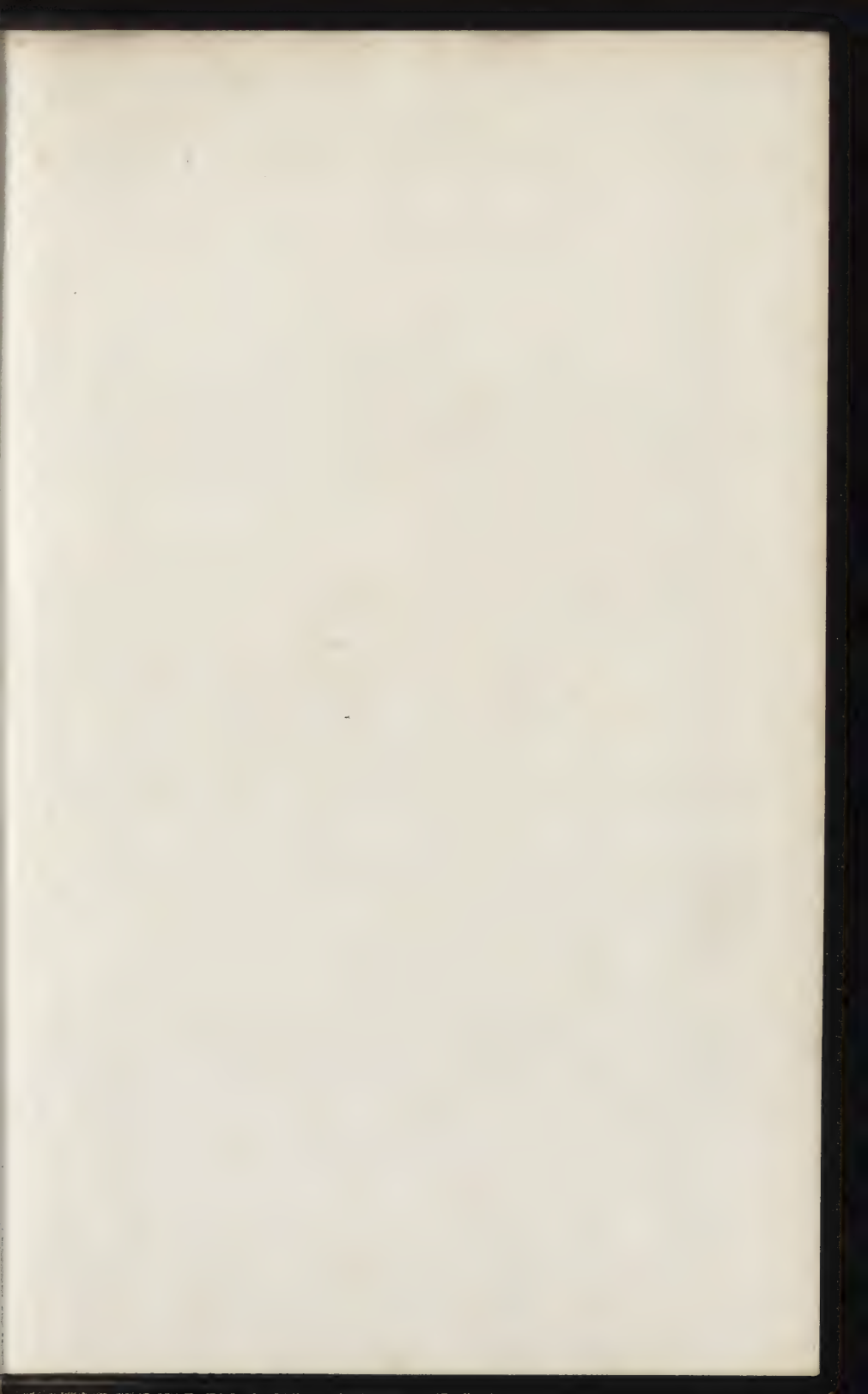














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